

FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY COMMITMENT
IN SAUDI ARABIA. A CASE STUDY OF
~~PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN RIYADH CITY.~~

BY

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Abstract

This study argues that ideological rather than material constraints are the major obstacles that limit full female participation in the Saudi Arabian labour force and hinder Saudi working women from combining their double roles as mothers and paid workers. As a developing country, Saudi Arabia is facing multiple problems. One of these challenges is the great shortage of human resources. In 1984/85, 59.8 per cent of the labour force in Saudi society was foreign. Female participation in waged employment is very low with only 5.1 per cent of women of working age participating in the labour force.

This ethnography focuses especially on working mothers in Riyadh and is based principally on intensive interviews with fifty women holding posts in the full range of women's occupations in Saudi Arabia.

After two general ethnographic chapters which outline Saudi women's lifestyle in the pre-oil and the modern periods, this thesis considers in detail women's activities in their paid employment and domestic roles. Special attention is given to Saudi ideologies which restrict women's participation in the labour force, in particular Saudi conceptions of male and female relations. One of the main arguments is that Islam in itself is not responsible for women's limited participation in the labour force, rather it is the interpretation of Islam which is heavily affected by socio-political factors in Saudi society.

Many studies of working women in Western countries concentrate on the phenomenon of the "double day" that working women face when they undertake a paid job in addition to their domestic responsibilities. According to this view, material constraints constitute the major problem of working women. Authors arguing from this view point assume that the availability of domestic replacements would solve the major problems experienced by these working women.

The present thesis argues that material constraints are not the main problem of working women in Riyadh. The influx of wealth has enabled many families to employ domestic help but, nevertheless, many working women still suffer from their conflicting double roles.

According to Saudi cultural beliefs, nature determines the sexual division of labour. Women are assumed to be mothers and housewives, and men are assumed to be the breadwinners of their families. The concept of a woman's "career" does not exist in Saudi society. A woman's career is her home and children.

There are three types of cultural and attitudinal factors that challenge Saudi working women. Firstly, there is women's conception of themselves. Women always locate themselves within the dominant culture which is greatly affected by male representations. Secondly, people's attitudes towards women's work play an important role in helping or hindering women to combine their double roles. Finally, there is the issue of husbands' support for their working wives. Because Saudi Arabia is a male-dominated society, husbands play an especially significant role in their wives' lives. They can be a great source of support

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and help, or they can be a source of frustration.

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Preface and Acknowledgement

Researching and writing this dissertation have been among the most difficult, exhausting and exciting experiences I have ever had. Not only did I learn a great deal about other women, but I discovered much that I had not known about myself and my gender.

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by name since I have changed all informants' names used in this thesis.

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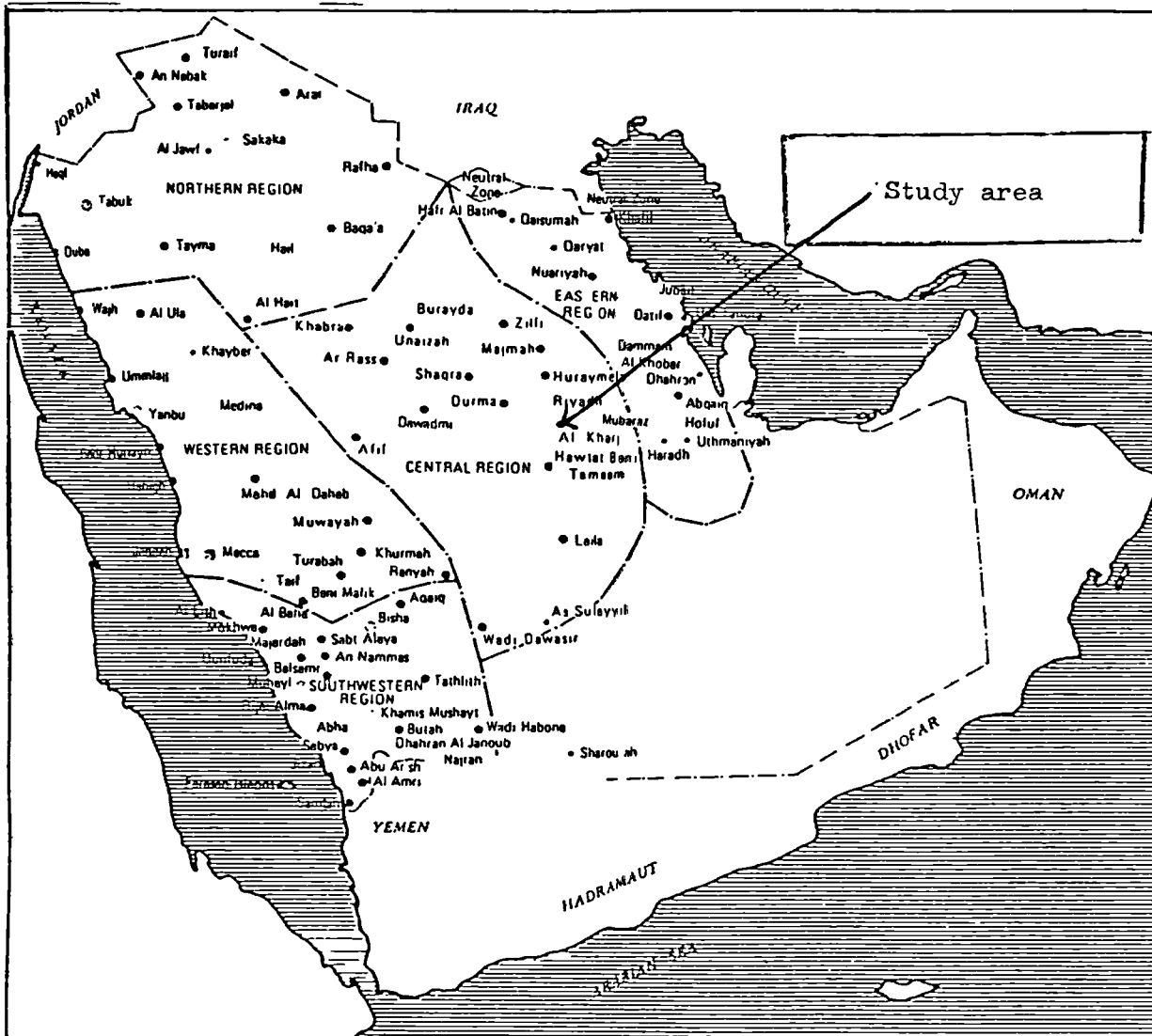
Most Arabic terms used in this thesis have been transliterated according to the system employed by Hans Wehr and J.M. Cowan "Arabic-English Dictionary".

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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Source: Third Development Plan 1400 - 1405 AH - 1980 - 1985 AD

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Planning.

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Chapter I

Introduction

According to Engels (1942), the absence of women in the labour market, and their confinement to the private sector, is responsible for their subordinated position in society. This ethnographic study argues that women's increasing participation in the labour market in the Saudi Arabian city of Riyadh is not by itself sufficient to improve the status of women in the family. Although women participate in the labour force in Saudi Arabia (for instance constitute 7.6 per cent of the civil service in Saudi Arabia), ideological assumptions about the nature and characteristics of the sexes perpetuate existing gender relations. Certain mechanisms such as the interpretation of Islam, kinship relations, socialization and the formal educational system maintain the sexual division of labour and the subordination of women in the labour market.

Men and women are brought up to believe that housework is a woman's responsibility; men only are the breadwinners of the family. When women enter the labour force, they add a new role to their traditional role. Both roles demand a great deal of women's time, energy, and skill. Fatherhood and paid work are seen as complementary and supportive of each other, while motherhood and paid work are seen to be in conflict. Working mothers are frequently accused in the media of being neglectful of their children and families, on the one hand, and uncommitted and unproductive in their work on the other. Thus, the present study was designed to

investigate both the ways in which women's paid work affects their domestic responsibilities as mothers and housewives, and the impact of women's familial roles on their performance of their paid work. This study will examine the material factors that enable working women to manage their "double day"; at the same time I will also consider the ideological structures that help or hinder working women to combine their "double roles". By using the concept "double roles", I mean the potential conflict that a person faces when he or she adds a new role to his or her expected behaviour in the society. By "double day" on the other hand, I mean the problems of scheduling and pressures of time in combining women's domestic and paid activities, which make their working hours longer and their material burden greater than that of women who do not participate in paid labour.

Following the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabian society has witnessed massive changes in almost every aspect of life. One of these changes has been the expansion of female education. Female education has opened up the new option for women to seek paid work. More married women join the labour force every year, and the question of women's double roles has acquired increasing significance.

The restrictions on female employment exacerbate the national shortage of human resources, which is one of the major challenges to development in Saudi society today. Foreign labour constitutes 59.8 per cent of the labour force. The female participation rate is very low, one of the lowest rates in the world (Dearden 1982). Only

5.1 per cent of Saudi women of working age participate in the labour force (The Fourth Development Plan: 89). Considering that the average cost of a student completing university is S.R.48,600, which is equal to \$13,800 (Alkashmiri 1985: 117), one can realize the amount of lost investment that the government must bear when educated women withdraw from the labour market.

Woman's work has already been the focus of research by some scholars in Saudi Arabia. Some of these studies, such as Al Gadi (1975), AlManaa (1982), Assad (1983), Al Saad (1982), Al Baker (1983), and Halawani (1982), have been directed at the study of working women in the labour force and the different factors that hinder them from fulfilling their work demands. On the other hand, other studies such as Assad (1977), Al Khateeb (1981), Nasser and Yaghmour (1983) have directed their attention at the study of the effects of woman's work on her family life and her power in family decision-making. No study has previously considered the mutual relationship between family and work and the way in which working mothers perceive and handle their double roles in day-to-day activities. Thus, the present study is a pioneer investigation which focuses its attention on the impact of family life on work, and the impact of work on family life.

This study was carried out in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. The name "Riyadh" means "gardens" and was first used in the 12th century. Riyadh lies in the southern part of Najd, the central area of the Arabian Peninsula. Before the discovery of oil, the Najd was

inhabited by dispersed tribes. The climate in Najd obliged the majority of the inhabitants there to lead a nomadic way of life. Herding was their primary livelihood. The emergence of the Wahabi movement in Najd has given Riyadh the reputation of being more conservative than other parts of the kingdom.

The discovery of oil in 1938 laid the foundation for the transformation of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia from a poor isolated country to an economic power at the centre of the world stage. The oil boom has encouraged the government to adopt a series of five year development plans which aim to achieve two main goals: to raise the standard of living of Saudi citizens by offering social services such as health care, housing, transportation, and social welfare and to channel the relatively sudden increase of wealth in Saudi Arabia into the creation of a progressive and self-sustaining economy.

Although most developing countries share some similarities, Saudi Arabia is in a unique position for two reasons. First, while most developing countries are suffering from a shortage of material resources, Saudi Arabia is one of the richest countries in the world. It is one of the largest oil exporters and has the largest share of world oil reserves. Most countries have experienced economic changes over a long period of time. But the relatively recent discovery of oil has enabled the Saudi economy to move very rapidly towards economic modernization. The influx of wealth has transformed the life style of the people of the Arabian Peninsula from a nomadic way of life to a cash economy based on the oil

industry, and this in a very short period of time. Thus, one can say that Saudi Arabia is a developing country with the economic resources of a developed country. Second, the location of Saudi Arabia as the heartland of Islam, and its role as the guardian of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, has given it a central religious importance in the Muslim world. At the same time, this has put more pressure on the Saudi government to adhere particularly closely to Islamic teachings, while confronting different opposing ideological forces from Eastern and Western countries. Saudi Arabia is one of the few Muslim countries which depends on Sharia law as the basis of its legal system. Following Islamic teachings does not mean that Saudi legislation is static; Saudi legislation, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, is adapted and reconstituted according to the demands of the modern state, providing it respects the main principles of Islam.

Before the discovery of oil, economic necessity obliged the majority of bedouin and rural women in the Arabian Peninsula to work inside and outside their homes to contribute to their families' subsistence. But their labour was not acknowledged as "work" because it was not paid, and it was instead considered part of their domestic duties. The influx of wealth, the growth of urbanization and the move toward an industrialized economy have created an increasing dichotomy between family and work. The oil boom has encouraged Saudi men to employ foreign workers and to seclude their women(2). Sexual segregation and the veiling of women are the most noticeable features of Saudi

gender relations. There is a strict spatial segregation between the sexes at schools, colleges, offices and banks. Almost all women wear a black veilabayah to cover their bodies and a small piece of cloth to cover the face. The strictness of covering the face is determined according to family lineage, family wealth, and the region in which the family lives. Some regions such as Hejaz in the West and the Eastern region are more flexible in covering the face than Riyadh. Sex segregation has enabled Saudi women to have their own lives apart from men. There is a noticeable distinction between the world of a man and the world of a woman.

Working mothers in Saudi Arabia today are confronted with a dilemma not experienced by Saudi women previously. They are faced with a conflict between staying at home and raising ten or more children or seeking a career and limiting their families to a small number of children. In pre-oil Saudi society, bedouin and rural women did not face the same conflict. This was due, in part, to the fact that they experienced no separation between home and workplace, and also to the widespread existence of the extended family system which meant that mothers were not the only persons looking after their children.

One of the important issues this study tries to explore is whether material constraints are the only problems faced by women working in Saudi Arabia. Does the widespread availability of a convenient domestic replacement for working women, in the form of domestic help or nurseries solve the problem of double roles for working women? How do women from different family income

levels manage to combine their double roles? Do all working women face the same material constraints in combining their paid work with their domestic responsibilities? Does women's participation in the labour force incidentally improve their status in Saudi family? These questions were examined for both the pre and post-oil discovery periods of history and in relation to Saudi women's varying contributions to their household's economy in these different periods.

Building on this research on Saudi women's double roles, I have also been able to consider several related issues. For example, many studies of working women indicate that women are not given the same wages and the same opportunities in the labour market as are men. Some economic theories, such as the approach to Human Capital theory, espoused by Blau and Jusenius argue that men and women do not have equal wages because women accumulate less human capital through work experience than men. The main argument of this theory is that persons, be they male or female, have various choices in the labour market, but men and women evaluate these options differently. Women's domestic responsibilities as mothers and housewives are thought to make them take more casual or sick leave (Blau & Jusenius 1976; O'Neil 1985). This view assumes that, on one level, women's double roles affect the individual working woman and reduce her performance and productivity in the labour force. On the national level, working mothers are often accused of being unproductive and intermittent in their careers, because they tend to spend fewer years in salaried employment than men. This

assumption is shared by development planners in Saudi Arabia, as in many other developing countries, and has led them to treat women as an unimportant part of the nation's human resources and fail to give them adequate opportunities to utilize their full capacities in salaried work. Women in Saudi Arabia are restricted to certain jobs that do not compete with men's traditional roles in the labour force. Jobs considered suitable for women include education, health services, social work, banking and private business - basically those jobs which are seen as extensions of women's domestic roles. The present study examines the assumption that working mothers constitute a burden on the Saudi economy. Is it true that working mothers do not fulfill their work demands and in what ways do familial responsibilities affect women's performance at work?

Most studies of women in Muslim countries argue that because of sex segregation rules, Muslim women display the lowest participation rates in the labour force in the world, and they accuse Islam of being responsible for this phenomenon (White, 1978; Youssef, 1974; Smock, 1977). One of the points that this study will look at is, to what extent is this argument applicable to Saudi Arabia? Is Islam as such responsible for women's limited participation in the labour force?

On a related theme, many studies of the veil in Muslim countries have been carried out by Western sociologists, and most of these studies reflect an ethnocentric point of view towards the veil. This study will try to find out to what extent Western points of view

on this topic are appropriate to Saudi society? How do Saudi women conceive of the veil? And what are the factors that encourage the existence of the veil in Saudi society?

The data for this study are derived from intensive interviews with fifty working mothers in Riyadh holding a range of different jobs and with different educational, occupational and family incomes. These interviews were supported by data gathered through participant observation and collection of published and unpublished materials.

The order of presentation of the data reflects the evolution of my thoughts during the research. Chapter One, the introduction, aims to give the reader a general overview of the research problem. The second chapter discusses the major theoretical debates related to the study. The third chapter explains the different techniques used in collecting the data and the justification for using them. Chapter Four provides a historical account of Saudi society, and women's lives in particular, before the discovery of oil. It also discusses the major events that took place in Najd before the discovery of oil, such as the Wahabi movement and the unification of the kingdom by the Al-Saud family - events which have continued to have a significant effect on women's lives since the discovery of oil. Chapter Five, considers women in Saudi society today and the impact of the discovery of oil on their lives. This chapter argues that although the discovery of oil has had some positive effects on women's lives, it has also led to women being increasingly secluded and more confined to their homes. Chapter Six discusses female employment in Saudi Arabia and how the perception that women are

inherently different from men has led to a failure to recognize women's potential contribution to the nation's human resources. Chapter Seven gives in detail different examples of the way in which working mothers from different family statuses manage to organize their double day. It also explains how the availability of foreign domestic help, on the one hand, and education on the other have changed women's conceptions of their domestic role and have made them become more involved in their salaried work. Chapter Eight identifies the different factors that help some working mothers and hinder others to combine their double roles. It also argues that family income is not the major factor that helps or hinders Saudi working women perform their double roles and that cultural factors are more significant in this regard. Chapter Nine, the conclusion, contains a summary and discussion of the findings of the study.

Footnotes:

(1) There is a shortage of statistics about women working in the informal sector such as bedouin, rural, tailors, dressmakers, and market sellers in Saudi Arabia. The great majority of women in Saudi Arabia are working in the civil service.

(2) Women's seclusion was common in urban areas in Najd and Hejaz. Bedouin and rural women were more active and enjoy more freedom than urban women.

Chapter II

The Debate on Women's Work

With the increasing number of women entering the labour force, an ever increasing volume of literature in both developed and developing countries has been devoted to the problem of women's paid work. "Traditionally" women have been the primary caretakers of children; women and men are brought up to believe that women are natural nurturers. The participation of women in the labour market is assumed to put more pressure and stress on working women. Woman's work is thought to lead to dysfunction in family structure and to have negative effects on other family members.

Sociologists have investigated this phenomenon from a number of different perspectives. Some writers such as Blumberg (1975), Srivastava (1978), and Kapur (1974) have discussed the reasons that compell women to seek paid work. Others such as Ismail (1981), Adam (1982) and Kapur (1970) have focused their attention on women's work and its impact on marital relations. Some researchers such as Nye (1963), Kandel (1984) and Abdel Fatah (1984) have studied women's work and its effects on young children, while studies such as Blumberg (1975), Abdelghaffar (1981), Nasser and Yaghmour (1984) have studied the impact of women's paid work on their power and influence in family decision-making. Although the focus of these

studies was the employed married woman, their emphasis varied according to the specific problem selected.

Since this study is concerned with female employment in a Muslim developing country, and the different factors that help or hinder Saudi working women to combine their productive and reproductive roles as mothers and paid workers, the literature which provides a context for the research concerns issues such as gender and the sexual division of labour in general, sexual segregation in developed and developing countries, and women's double roles in Capitalist, Socialist and Third World countries. Moreover, because Islam constitutes a crucial aspect of Saudi ideology, specific interest was directed at the investigation of the impact of Islam on women's lives in Muslim countries in general and their labour force participation in particular. Finally I discuss the literature on veiling as a national issue in most Muslim countries, and one of the important features of women's experience in Saudi Arabia.

I have deliberately drawn on a wide range of literature (a) because research studies of Saudi Arabia itself are still few in number and do not cover the different debates relating to the problem of the present research and (b) because hypotheses based on historical and culturally specific data have often been descriptive, leading to overgeneralization.

The Sexual Division of Labour

Since women in Saudi society are restricted to certain jobs which are assumed to suit their "feminine" nature, the first question raised in the present study is, what are the assumptions surrounding the notion of "feminine" characteristics and to what extent do innate biological variations determine the division of labour between sexes? There is no doubt that there are some physical differences between men and women, but to what extent are these biological variations responsible for determining feminine or masculine behaviour? If female activities and behaviour are physically determined, why do they differ among societies?

Most societies have a division of labour according to gender and age. The sexual division of labour, in any society, not only determines the appropriate tasks for men and women to perform but the social status of both sexes as well. Cross-cultural studies emphasize that the sexual division of labour is culturally and socially determined. Male and female tasks vary from one society to another, according to the ascribed characteristics of males and females in these societies.

Margret Mead (1981), in her pioneering study of variations between masculine and feminine personality types in different societies, found that some important characteristics such as aggression, tenderness, gossip, religious power...etc which are thought to be feminine in one society, are considered masculine in another. Mead argues that masculinity and femininity are not

biologically but rather socially and culturally determined. From early childhood, each baby learns how she or he should behave as a girl or a boy. Mead states: "In every known society, mankind has elaborated the biological division of labour into forms often very remotely related to the original biological differences" (Mead 1981: 30). Based on Mead's theory, Rogers (1980) emphasizes that in most countries, there is some kind of division of labour between the sexes. There are male jobs and female jobs, but these jobs are not the same in all societies. What are considered female jobs in one country, may be male in another. Rogers indicates that there is a difference between the word "sex" and "gender". While sex is physically determined, gender is culturally determined. Most differences between male and female behaviour are culturally determined. Our learned behaviour differs from society to society according to cultural variation: "The actual pattern of female and male activities will be devised by each society according to its beliefs about the reproductive functions of the sexes" (Rogers, 1980: 14).

In her book Sex, Gender and Society Oakley (1972) provides different examples of how male and female behaviours are culturally determined. The socialization process prepares male and female children for different future roles. The sexual division of labour is not the same in all societies: Every society does have rules about which activities are suitable for males and which for females; but these rules vary a great deal from one society to another (Oakley 1972: 128). All the previous discussions about gender

roles focus on the one basic point that human gender behaviour is not inherited but is culturally determined. Variations between gender roles are due to variations in the socialization process. However, despite this variation, cross-cultural studies indicate that, in a wide range of societies, the sexual division of labour places women in a secondary position to men. Whyte (1978: 167) in his cross-cultural study of 93 cultures, states that women have a universally subordinated position relative to men and argues that although the degree of this subordination ranges from total to minimal, male domination is the most common pattern in the world.

Some writers have expressed this through the idea of a dichotomy between the public political world of men and the private domestic world to which women are often confined. However, as has been more recently pointed out (Redclift and Mingione 1985), these concepts may be more specific to the ideology of industrial society and must be used with caution within a cross-cultural frame of reference.

There are two major trends in the literature on women's subordination. The first approach takes the subordination of women as a universal phenomenon and tries to offer different explanations for it. The second approach attempts to situate subordination in a historical perspective, arguing that significant differences in women's power and autonomy are discernible and women must be located within changes in the mode of production or within different cultural variations.

A) The Universalistic approach

Writers in this tradition have emphasized a number of different aspects which are held responsible for women's subordination, including the structural functionalist discussion of sexual division of labour in the family, the dichotomy between public and private space or between nature and culture, the structure of political power and its expression in the educational system, the primacy of patriarchy, and finally the influence of religious ideology.

(1) Structural Functionalism: some writers assume that women's subordination is a natural functional requisite of society and that men and women are biologically prepared for different roles in society. Parsons (1956) representing the classical approach in sociology, looks at the sexual division of labour from a structural functional perspective. Parsons argues that the sexual division of labour is natural and important for maintaining the stability of the family and society. Woman's primary role is to be a mother and housewife; child socialization is her principle duty in life. A man is a breadwinner for the family and the representative of his family in public life. Parsons claims that the status of the family is determined by the level of the job that the husband (rather than the wife) occupies. He argues that women's work may cause instability in the natural balance of the family. According to Parsons, the man should be the head of the family because he is the provider of family needs. It is obvious that Parsons is

concerned with women's reproductive rather than with her productive role. He focusses on women's role in the socialization process and its benefits to family and society in the first place, and he ignores completely her productive role and its benefits to woman, family and society.

(2) Separate spheres: The domestic orientation of women is assumed to be responsible for women's subordinated position by writers in this tradition. Rosaldo (1974) argues that the widespread responsibility of women for childcare, socialization, and daily reproductive activities absorbs them in the private sector. Women have been confined to their homes to raise children and fulfill their maternal needs. Men, on the other hand, lead a less constrained life; they have not had the same restrictions as women, so they have the chance to move about, to learn, to be exposed to public life. Women's role in the domestic sector is devalued because it does not contribute to culture, or have any social classification, domestic work is similar in all cultures. Men's role in public life is different and their contribution to culture has ranked them in a hierarchy of achievement. Similarly Ortner (1974) argues that a woman's biological characteristics seem to doom her to a reproductive role, making her "closer to species life", as she puts it. She argues that women's universal subordination can be understood by seeing woman as closer to nature and, since nature is subordinated to culture, woman's role is subordinated to man.

(3) The primacy of patriarchy: Kuhn (1978) and Millet (1971) argue that patriarchy is responsible for women's subordinated

position, both in production and reproduction. Kuhn emphasizes that the marriage contract is the basic cause of sexual inequality because it places women in the domestic sector and men in the public sector. Kuhn claims that patriarchy and male domination place women in a secondary status to man. The sexual division of labour in the family means that women should work for family subsistence, and man should work for exchange.

(4) Psychoanalysis and the construction of femininity: Some authors try to explain women's subordination from a psycho-analytic point of view. According to psychoanalytic theory, feminine and masculine personalities and roles are the result of social relations and experiences in early childhood. Thus, Chodorow (1978) argues that women's subordination is perpetuated through the mother-daughter relation. Chodorow stresses that as long as the woman or mother, in particular, is taking care of children in the early years of childhood, and treats children of different sexes in different ways, femininity will be perpetuated "The care and socialisation of girls by women ensures the production of feminine personalities" (Chodorow, 1978: 58)

(5) Politics and the state: Papanek (1977) attempts to demonstrate women's subordination to politics and decision makers. She claims that although most governments proclaim justice and equality for all citizens, no government takes the essential steps to achieve equality. Attempts made to improve the status of women rarely aim to keep them equal to man. Papanek (1977: 14) states that:

Although some governments recognise the importance of

women in a superficial sense, no government now in power stands or falls on its policies towards women. They do not constitute a single political constituency on issues of social and economic development.

(6) Educational discrimination: Byrne (1978), Madsen (1979) and Elion (1983) emphasize that the educational system is the key factor in women's subordination in production and reproduction. Byrne claims that boys and girls are channelled into different subjects. Girls are encouraged to study languages, secretarial skills and arts, while boys are encouraged to study engineering, physics and mathematics. Different qualifications mean different opportunities to work and consequently different wages. Female education situates women in a secondary status in the labour market.

(7) Religious ideology and the nature of the sacred: It has been argued that women's subordination can be attributed to religious beliefs. All religions from Hinduism and Buddhism to Islam have defined women's role in the domestic sector, for the raising of children and the comfort of husbands. All religions have located women in an inferior status to man (Carmodo 1979).

If we look at the previous explanations of women's subordination, we notice that they all assume that women's position is in a static condition, and they all put greater emphasis on one factor rather than another. I would argue that a combination of different factors determine women's status in the family such as: education, the political system, socialization...etc.

B) Historical "Relativistic" Approaches

Other sociologists examine women's subordination from a historical perspective. They argue that women's subordination should not be treated as a universal phenomenon; one should look to the social and historical patterns that produce it. In his book The Origin of The Family, Private Property and the State (1981), Engels developed a theory of the process of the development of the family under different modes of production. He assumed that in early stages, societies were egalitarian. However, a sexual division of labour did exist in these societies. Women were responsible for the domestic work and men provided the food, but neither one had more access to the means of production than the other. Men and women had the same power in decision-making. The innovation of tools and the domestication of animals led to the possibilities of creation of surplus and introduced significant changes in gender relations. Private property, initially in the form of herding, made its owner the ruler of the household. Engels argues that in capitalist societies, relations between spouses are determined by their economic contributions. The privatization of domestic work in class societies puts women in a subordinated position to men. Women's emancipation in production should therefore make them equal to men.

We can already see from this that to emancipate woman and

make her the equal of the man is and remains an impossibility so long as the woman is shut out from social productive labor and restricted to private domestic labour. The emancipation of women will only be possible when woman can take part in production on a large scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time. (Engels 1981: 221)

Following the same perspective, Rowbotham (1982) criticises sociologists for using the concept "patriarchy", in a general sense, as responsible for a woman's subordination. She opposes the use of the concept "patriarchy" as a biological fact, while ignoring the historical process that places men in a superior position to women. She argues that one should not forget that sexual inequality is not the same in all societies and, although it may be correct to claim that men are dominant in most societies, the nature of male domination varies from one society to another. Some societies have more egalitarian relations than others. Thus, patriarchy should not be used as a universal and unchangeable concept. Patriarchy was not, and is not, the same in all societies or under different modes of production.

I would argue that it is dangerous to make general statements about women in different countries. Women's status varies from one society to another, and even in the same society from time to time according to different economic, political and cultural factors. One should be careful in using the concept "status" or the "lowest status". How is status to be evaluated? How are women valued? By women themselves or by men? Maybe men

do not value women, but do not women value themselves? Sometimes, women are regarded as subordinated on the basis of one criterion while personally regarding themselves in a better situation than those who evaluate them. For example, women in Muslim countries are regarded by many Western people as occupying the lowest status in the world, while some women in Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia consider themselves to be in a better position than Western women. It is therefore difficult to make generalized statements about the "status" of women.

Sexual Segregation in the Labour Market

Recent studies have emphasized that women do not only occupy a subordinated position in the family but in the labour market as well. Blaxall (1981) argues that women in most countries tend to be segregated into certain "female" jobs. Women occupy a secondary position in the labour market. They have lower wages than men for doing the same work and have fewer opportunities for work and promotions than men.

A basic question that one should ask is, why do women occupy a secondary position in the labour market? Is it a "natural" outcome of women's capacities and aptitudes? Some economists have maintained that women are given lower wages because they are less efficient than men; they have fewer skills and as a work force they are more likely to display higher turnover rates (Blaxall 1981: 1; Madden 1985: 76-113). However, feminists have argued that

ideological assumptions about the innate abilities of women are reconstructed and reformulated for the benefit of the capitalist production system. Sociologists have given different interpretations of this phenomenon and have suggested that these features are an effect rather than a cause of women's disadvantaged position. Griffiths (1976) argues that women receive an unequal share of the benefits of their work under the assumption that men and not women are the breadwinners of the family. Women have lower wages than men, less and fewer pensions or social security rights. She emphasizes that many women in the U.S.A are raising children without any financial support from their husbands. Many American women are obliged to work out of necessity. The author stresses that men always have better jobs and better conditions at the work place.

Beechy (1977) emphasizes that capital benefits from women's productive and reproductive roles, and from married women in particular. Married women can be advantageous to capital. Because they are assumed to be dependent on their husbands to support them, they are usually paid lower wages, and their work is usually used to strengthen competition between the sexes for the benefits of the owner of capital.

According to Mackintosh (1984), women's subordination is embedded in the sexual division of labour, which treats men and women as unequal genders. Mackintosh outlines different aspects of women's subordination in the labour market. Thus, for example, women workers tend to be segregated into certain industrial

sectors, and into certain occupations within those sectors. Within these jobs, women usually have poor conditions of work. The author argues that to understand the sexual division of labour in any society, we have to go beyond the benefits of women's work to capital. The sexual division of labour is a general phenomenon in all societies and under different modes of production.

Sharp (1981) indicates that women's biological role in pregnancy, childbirth, and child rearing tend to exclude women from full integration in the labour market. Sharp argues that the ideology of women's domesticity means that women are always treated as a reserve labour force, who can be encouraged to work when they are needed and thrown out of work when a crisis sets in. During World War II, women in Britain were drawn away from their homes to fill the gap in industry created by men joining the army. Women proved their ability to carry out heavy tasks, and no one objected to women's work at that time. After the war, women were encouraged to go back to their homes to fulfill their domestic tasks as mothers and housewives.

The second question that emerges from the previous discussion is the relevance of such an analysis beyond the western industrial economies. If this is the case for employed women in developed countries, what about women in developing countries? Do they face the same difficulties in the labour market? To what extent do programmes of national economic development encourage women to participate in the labour force?

Although, ideally, "development" in most developing countries

may aim to improve the economic and social life of the masses of the society, women's needs and interests are frequently neglected. Economists and feminist sociologists have evaluated the specific impact of development processes on women. Economists assume that economic development will automatically improve the socio-economic condition of all members of society, and will provide wide scope for women to participate in the labour market.

Recent studies, however, emphasize that development has often restricted women's economic contribution to the family sphere. Development programmes have led to the increasing "domestication" of women. Women in most Third World countries are restricted to certain jobs, which are thought suitable to their ascribed female nature.

Boserup (1970), Rogers (1980), Buvimic (1983), Bunster (1977), Mernissi (1977), Tinker (1975), Blumberg (1975), Smock (1977), Youssef (1974), Bay (1983), Steel (1983), Allaghi (1981), and Al Manaa (1981) argue that economic development has had a negative impact on women because it has deprived women of their traditional extensive participation in the subsistence economy and has not offered them new opportunities for participating in the waged labour force. Women are restricted to domestic jobs in the labour market.

Boserup (1970) also points out that when men occupy most jobs in modern industry, they become familiar with modern equipment, and know how to deal with modern ways of life, while women continue in the old ways. Economic progress benefits men as wage earners.

Women's position is left unchanged, or even deteriorates. As a result of the competition from modern technology, women are usually hired in unskilled low wage jobs, while men are hired in skilled jobs. Boserup adds that sex discrimination in industry is not only limited to developing countries but is equally true of industrial countries. Both in developed and developing countries, skilled jobs are usually occupied by men.

Elson and Pearson (1981) argue that women have lower wages than men for two reasons. Firstly the sexual division of labour in the family places women in a subordinated position to men. Secondly, their secondary position in the labour market relegates them to the unskilled, low wage sector. The sexual division of labour in the family assumes that the man is the breadwinner of the family and the representative of his family in public. So, even when a woman contributes to family subsistence, she is not regarded as equal to a man because she does not represent the family in public. In the labour market, women are usually excluded from certain jobs and confined to others, which are considered private and secondary to men's public jobs. Although women's work often needs considerable skill, patience and dexterity, it is often regarded as repetitious, tedious, and monotonous. It is always claimed that female "nimble fingers" are a "natural" attribute but actually, as Elson and Pearson argue, far from being inherited, women are trained by their mothers to do these tasks from early childhood.

If we look carefully at all these factors affecting female

employment that have been mentioned, we find that they all derive from the ideological construction of women as a gender, which defines female behaviour and the role that women are expected to perform. Rogers (1980) clarifies this point by showing how women are exploited under the ideology of women's domesticity, which emphasizes that domestic tasks are the suitable jobs for them to perform. The domesticity of women excludes women in Third World countries from sophisticated jobs, and restricts them to low paid, tedious ones. Rogers (1980: 41) states that:

This kind of "development" may, in fact, intervene directly in women's subsistence activities in a negative sense. It may increase their workload and in some cases reduce their opportunities for earning cash income by diverting land, labour and marketing outlets to cash crops, for which payment goes mainly to the men.

In this context, AlManaa (1981) states that Saudi women are not given the same opportunities to participate in the labour force as men. Women are restricted to certain "feminine" jobs. Most decision making jobs are held by men, and most vocational training is directed at men.

In sum, this research comes to the conclusion that development has negative effects on women, since it restricts the range of women's productive activities and widens the gap between male and female earnings. However, the important question that one might ask here is, why does development fail to recognize women's needs or value their economic contribution? Tinker (1975) answers this question and argues that development plans have failed

to fulfill people's needs because they are based on imported assumptions, rather than on local needs. Development projects based on Western ethnocentric views have had negative effects on women by making them more dependent on men. Tinker (1975: 5) attributes this failure to three reasons:

A. Development plans fail to recognize the value of women's traditional productive roles.

B. Development projects reinforce traditional values, which restrict women's activities to household, child bearing and child rearing tasks.

C. Development planners superimpose western values of appropriate work for women in developed societies on developing societies (Tinker 1975: 5).

But does this mean that "development" everywhere and among different classes has the same impact on women? I think it is difficult to argue that development always has a negative impact on women or to assume that it has the same effects on different categories of women in the same society. Blumberg (1975) supports this point when she argues that development does not improve working class women's condition and that the only women who benefit from development are elite or middle class women, who can take advantage of access to education and the opportunity to be employed.

It is always assumed that as developing countries are moving towards industrialization, women will have more chance of employment and be integrated in the labour market. But evidence

proves that this assumption is not always true. Mernissi (1977) emphasizes that industrialization in any country does not necessarily mean greater participation of women in the labour force. She cites the example of Morocco, a Muslim country, and argues that although legislation offered equality between the sexes, traditional family codes and values hinder women from enjoying these rights.

Stell and Campbell (1983) comment on the previous discussion by underlining the need to distinguish between the impact of development and industrialization. Development increases women's participation in the labour force, and provides more public services, while industrialization tends to push women out of the labour force. They also discuss another point that one should consider in evaluating the impact of development on women's work. That is the increased female participation in the labour force does not necessarily mean improvement in the status of women. They explain their theory in terms of supply and demand. When the supply of female workers is more than demand, wages tend to be lower, and vice versa, when supply is less than demand, wages tend to be higher.

This point of view is extremely relevant to female employment in Saudi Arabia. In the early days of increasing female education, there was a desperate need for working women. Women were encouraged to work by giving them allowances, and sometimes employed in certain jobs which were of higher grade than their qualifications. But as the number of female graduates has

increased, and female jobs are scarce, more and more women have become unemployed. Or, sometimes they have been forced to accept jobs which are of a lower grade than their qualifications.

To conclude this section about "development" and its impact on female employment in developing countries, I would say that it is wrong to assume that the effects of development are the same on women from different classes. For example, one of the significant effects of development is the expansion of female education. Education makes women more aware of their rights and enables them to seek paid jobs. But actually not all women benefit from education to the same degree. Women in urban areas, and from well-to-do families, have more opportunities to finish their higher education than the majority of women. Women with less education are pushed out of the labour market. Thus, I would say that development has had some negative and some positive effects on Saudi women. Development limits the possibility of employment in the formal labour market to a small number of educated women. These and other issues related to Saudi women's paid work will be discussed in more detail in the coming chapters.

The previous discussion of women's subordinated position in the labour market, relates to employed women in capitalist countries. But what is the position of employed women in socialist countries? Do they have better opportunities than women in capitalist ones? This question is examined by Molyneux (1981). She argues that there is no doubt that women's employment is increasing substantially in socialist economies. The level of female

employment is equal to or higher than that of women in capitalist countries. Women are encouraged to enter new jobs which have previously been conceived of as male jobs. Nevertheless, the majority of women are drawn into certain jobs which are lower paid than men's such as: health services, education, the service occupations and light industry. These jobs, because of the bias in attitudes towards "productive" work, are not regarded as being as productive as other heavy industrial jobs. Despite differences in the percentage of female employment in socialist countries, women's subordination in the labour force is still apparent.

Sociological Studies of Women's Double Roles

I would like to indicate at the outset that when I say women's double roles, I do not mean that women have only two roles to perform. Women often play multiple roles as mother, housewife, sister, daughter and paid worker, and often face specific demands because of the different needs of these relationships. However, this study focuses on women's productive work in relation to their reproductive work. In most countries the fact is that even when married women are employed, domestic work and child caring are still considered their primary responsibility and employed women are always expected to perform the two roles of both mother and paid worker.

A number of studies have examined the mutual relationship between the productive and reproductive roles of women, and they

have explained the way in which women's position in the family affects their paid work, and vice versa. Some studies emphasize that tension between these roles is a very widespread phenomenon, relevant to women in both developed and developing countries, and under capitalist or socialist systems. Across a wide range of societies, women are expected to take greater responsibility for the reproductive activities of the domestic sphere than men do.

Boulding (1976) has studied the familial constraints of working women historically, from the earliest hunting and gathering societies to the most industrialized societies of the twentieth century. She argues that women everywhere and at different periods of time have suffered from their triple role as "breeder, feeder, and producer". However, the degree of suffering varies from class to class. Using data from a Unesco time budget series, Boulding states that working women in most countries are overloaded with three roles, while men suffer from role deprivation; men in most countries do not spend more than half an hour in housework. Men do not share with women the task of socializing their children; they do not perform their parenting role.

Empirical studies of women's double role have been greatly affected in their approach by social theories of women's subordination. Sociologists have interpreted women's double role according to their theoretical orientations. Some sociologists such as Rapoport and Rapoport (1980) and Young and Willmott (1984), who adopted a Parsonian approach, have focused their attention on the impact of women's double roles in the family. They consider

women's work in terms of the structural functional perspective. They assume that the sexual division of labour is important for the proper functioning of family and that women's extra-domestic employment creates familial constraints and dilemmas in sex roles. Rapoport and Rapoport (1980), for example, focus their attention on the family and indicate that female participation in the labour force has affected the social structure of the family and has created a new type of "dual career" family, where both husband and wife work inside and outside the domestic sphere. Husbands share domestic work and wives share paid work; they have a more equal relationship. But the authors claim that changes in sex roles cause strain and tension in the family. Dual career families usually suffer from different types of dilemmas: the dilemma of "overload", normative dilemmas, identity dilemmas, social dilemmas and role cycle dilemmas. Husbands and wives in these families, because of their overloaded schedule, may not have time to give each other support and affection needed for their careers.

Young and Willmott (1984) in the study of the "symmetrical family" in England, claim that the family has passed through three stages. In the first stage, all members of the extended family worked together as a productive unit. In the second stage, the separation between the family and the work place occurred and people were no longer employed as a family unit but as individuals. The third stage represents the symmetrical family where the nuclear family replaced the extended family. This type of family is more democratic than before; roles between spouses are less segregated.

Husbands do more housework today than was previously the case.

Two important reservations could be mentioned in regard to these studies. First, although they aim to discuss the problems of working women in general, they focus their attention on middle class employed women, who work for career satisfaction, and ignore working class women who work out of financial necessity. Second, because these studies are highly influenced by the functionalist approach, they assume that women's employment will automatically lead to changes in sex roles in the family. But they do not give us a satisfactory explanation of how these changes take place or how men and women conceive of their changing roles in the family.

Some sociologists have discussed women's double roles from a different perspective. They have tried to explain women's subordination through the relationship between the productive and reproductive roles of women in capitalist societies. Two approaches can be distinguished in explaining the relationship between production and reproduction. The first approach, represented in the writings of Pollert (1981), Westwood (1984) and Hartmann (1981), argues that women's subordinated position derives from the labour market. Women's low wages, their restriction to unskilled jobs and their secondary position in the job hierarchy leads to their subordinated position in the family. Women's lesser economic contribution to their family places them in a secondary position to men in the family, and this in turn enforces them in a secondary status in the labour market. Pollert (1981), in her study of women factory workers in England, argues that capitalism

is the crucial factor in women's oppression. Women's subordinated position springs from their exclusion from production and public activities. She claims that female culture prepares women to be housewives and not to be skilled workers. So, when women enter the labour market, they are treated as unskilled workers and are given lower wages. Pollert argues that women's lives are crushed between productive and reproductive activities, between wage labour and domestic labour. Women are exploited both by their employers and their husbands.

Another study, conducted by Westwood (1984) in an English factory, claims that patriarchy and capitalism are the main sources of women's subordination within the family and at the work place. As working class women, they have lower wages. Their economic needs force them to look to marriage as the only way to improve their situation but, in this way, they become more dependent on men and subordinate to them. Working women with small children manage to combine their double roles by taking part-time jobs which increase their subordination at work. Westwood also insists that women are exploited at work and in their families. It is not only women's energy that is exploited but their cash resources as well.

Similarly, Hartmann (1981) insists that patriarchy and the specific nature of capitalism places women in a secondary status to men. Job segregation by sex is the primary mechanism for men's superiority over women. Women in class societies are given lower wages because they are considered unskilled workers. Their low

wages encourage them to marry and be more dependent on men. Thus, men benefit in two ways; by having a better salary and by being placed as the breadwinners of the family, they become the rulers of the family. Women, on the other hand, are assumed to be in a secondary status in the labour market and this leads to their secondary status in the family.

The second approach, represented in the writings of some sociologists such as Kuhn (1978) and Benston (1980) argues on the other hand, that women's subordination is located in the family, the sexual division of labour in the family places men in a superior position to women. Women's domestic responsibilities hinder them from being fully integrated into the labour market, and this makes women's secondary. Women's secondary position in the labour market strengthens their subordination in the family.

Kuhn (1978) suggests that the sexual division of labour in the family is the crucial factor for women's subordination. She stresses that the marriage contract gives the husband the right to control his wife's work and the means of production. She emphasises that because of the sexual division of labour, women tend to work for family consumption, while men tend to work for exchange. Kuhn stresses that although the marriage contract can be seen as a contract of employment, it differs from contracts between employer and employee in two crucial respects. First, the wife is not free to change her "employer" at any time she likes because the marriage relationship is a permanent relation. Second, in the marriage contract, the wife does not exchange her work for a wage; her

domestic work is unpaid.

Benston (1980) also argues that the roots of women's subordination lie in the family system. Because of women's work in the family aims to produce use-value without exchange value, her work is not considered a "real work" in capitalist societies. Benston indicates that in the present day, societies have become very materialistic; a person is valued according to the amount of money he or she owns. Since women's work in the family is unpaid, their "work" is considered valueless. And even women themselves are not considered to be worth as much as men who work for money. Benston raises a very important point, which I strongly support, that it is not enough to get women into the labour market to solve the problem of women's subordination and achieve equality between sexes, more important is the conversion of private domestic work into a public industry.

The same point is made by Croll (1981) in her study of the relationship between the productive and reproductive activities of rural women in four socialist countries, the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and Tanzania. She argues that because of Engels stress on the importance of women's paid work to production, governments in these countries have tried to socialize domestic tasks by establishing public and community services such as creches, nurseries, food processing plants and public dining rooms to lessen the domestic burden of women's double roles. However, these services are not sufficient and are not equally distributed among cities and rural areas to meet the demands of women. The

continuing demands of domestic labour have forced the Chinese and Cuban governments to create a family code which emphasizes that in a household where both spouses are employed, housework should be shared by both sexes. Many seminars were carried out to encourage both spouses to share the work inside and outside the household. In the Soviet Union and Tanzania, on the other hand, no effort was made to alter the sexual division of labour within the family. Women manage to combine their double roles in these countries by withdrawing their labour from either the productive or the reproductive sphere, by reducing their number of children, and by the informal sharing of domestic work among all women in the same household, kin groups, or village. Croll argues that there is a large gap between the theory of equality and the practice in regard to women's double roles; women tend to work longer hours than men in both production and reproduction.

Production and Reproduction

Any investigation of the relationship between the productive and reproductive roles of women must examine the varying definitions of these concepts and consider their use in the contemporary literature. The concepts production and reproduction have been used by sociologists with a variety of meanings, and the theoretical debate is still open.

One of the problems involved is that of terminology. Redclift (1985) has mentioned that there are different dichotomies, such

as household & non-household, public & private, domestic & public, formal & informal, production & reproduction, which are misleading and ambiguous. The only common thing among these dichotomies is the delimitation of a separate sphere, where consumption and individual livelihoods are shaped through personal bonds existing in opposition to the public world of production.

"Productive" and "reproductive" activities are very closely related, and it is very difficult to make a distinction between them. Reproductive work always contains many productive activities. However, the concept "production" is usually used by economists to mean "waged work" only.

Some writers such as Boserup (1970) and Rogers (1980) oppose economists' definition of "production" as "waged work only" because women in rural areas do many tasks which contribute directly to family subsistence and are still unpaid. These productive activities are undervalued by economists because they are considered part of women's domestic work.

Buvinic (1983), King and Evenson (1983), Davanzo and Poh-lee (1983) suggest that sociological studies of women's work should use qualitative methods instead of the quantitative methods that economists usually use. They argue that women's work should be measured by the time that women spend in performing their household and non-household activities.

Engels (1946) makes a distinction between the concepts of production and reproduction. By the word "production" he means the production of goods, of means of livelihood such as food, clothing

and shelter. He uses "reproduction" to refer to the production of human beings, socialisation and performance of domestic housework. Engels indicates that women in class societies work for their husbands, not for society. So, although their domestic work is important for capitalism, it is undervalued because it is not used for exchange only for private use.

Meillassoux and O'Laughlin (1974), on the other hand, do not make a distinction between productive and reproductive work. Social reproduction implies not only the reproduction of individuals but the reproduction of a particular system of production. Production and reproduction are to be seen as a unified process. For Meillassoux, all human labour that produces use value is productive. Women, like men, are agents of production in all modes of production. For them, wage labour is also reproductive because it produces the commodities which go into workers' subsistence.

The concept of "Reproduction" is more ambiguous than that of "Production". Lewis (1982) and Blumberg (1975) have used the concept of "reproduction" in a narrow sense, by which they mean the biological production of children and women's fertility in particular. Mackintosh (1977) and McDonough and Harrison (1978) use the term reproduction to refer to social relations within marriage and kinship relations.

Edholm et al (1977) and Harris and Young (1981) have distinguished three types of "reproduction": social reproduction which leads to reproducing a particular social formation, labour

force reproduction, and finally biological reproduction. Harris and Young have indicated three ways in which women's reproductive role supports capitalism: through the reproduction of individuals, through the socialization process in which individuals are socialized according to the prevailing ideology, and through the day-to-day performance of domestic work.

In the present study, I use the concept of "production" to mean the "paid work" of women and by "reproduction" I mean the reproduction of the labour force - producing children, preparing them through the socialization process to be labourers in the future and performing domestic labour. From my point of view, it is extremely difficult to make a distinction between productive and reproductive activities in rural or bedouin areas where there is no distinction between the public and private spheres, and women are usually doing both activities at the same time and sometimes at the same place.

It is easier to make a distinction between these two activities in industrial societies where there is a clear distinction between waged and non-waged work. But this does not mean that because reproductive work is not paid it is not important. Reproduction is very important to the existence of production. It produces the labourers, who work in production. Reproductive activities such as raising children, cooking, cleaning...etc save time and energy and enable labourers to intensify their efforts in production. Some reproductive activities such as cooking or weaving are transformed into

commodities which command wages.

Women's Double Roles in Third World countries

A series of recent empirical studies have examined women's double roles in Third World countries. Do women in developing countries face the same difficulties as women in developed countries? And to what extent are these previous approaches applicable there?.

Some sociological studies of Third World countries argue that because of the prevalence of the extended family system and the low cost of domestic help, working women in developing countries do not face the same practical difficulties as working women in developed countries. Papanek (1975) claims that the availability of domestic help for middle class women in developing countries enables them to combine their double role easily.

Women in less industrialized countries may face fewer difficulties in entering the labour force than women in the highly industrialized nations, where the cost of domestic help is prohibitive and child-care facilities are not provided by the government or private employers (Papanek 1975: 61)

Caldwell (1978) in a study carried out in Nigeria suggests another reason why working women in that country do not face the same constraints, as women in more developed societies, in combining their two roles. The typical family in Nigeria is an

extended family. Thus, working mothers do not bear all the responsibilities of raising their children, and all the women in the household share domestic duties. Having children is not incompatible with women's work because Yoruba women usually take their children along with them to work or leave them with their grandparents at home.

Other sociologists oppose this point of view. They argue that the poorer the country, the more suffering women face and these researchers have attempted to investigate the various strategies that women use in combining productive and reproductive work. These include:

(1) A cut in leisure activities: Buvinic (1983) argues that female participation in the labour force in developing countries means more burdens for working women in comparison with men. Whether women are working or not, men do not participate in domestic work. Buvinic describes the efforts that women make to combine household and non-household activities. Poor women tend to work longer hours than men do. Women contribute to family subsistence by working inside and outside their families. Buvinic emphasises that when women enter the labour market, it is leisure time rather than domestic work time that it is cut down.

Evidence from the Third World countries indicates that poor women tend not to make trade-offs between child care and market work. When these women enter the labour market, it is leisure time rather than home production time that is reduced (Buvinic 1983: 20)

(2) Choosing compatible jobs: Bunster (1983) argues that the

principle way for women in Lima, Peru to minimise the costs of undertaking paid work in addition to their domestic work is by choosing particular occupations like marketing which allow flexible hours or permit them to bring their children along with them.

(3) Choosing a suitable time to enter the labour market: Perlee (1981), in her study of a resettlement community in Delhi, found that among this population there was a certain age for women to enter the labour market, usually in their thirties and forties. At this age, women have a certain amount of confidence on the bases of a secure position in their conjugal families and have teenage children who help in domestic activities. Thus, they are able to combine their roles by getting assistance from their daughters or mothers. Perlee (1981: 75) emphasises that the mother-daughter relation in South Delhi is not only part of a traditional relationship but also an adaptive strategy based on mutual interests: Mothers enable married daughters to work by helping out with domestic responsibilities as often as married daughters help their mothers.

DaVanzo and Pohlee (1983) point out that there are three factors that determine women's participation in the labour force in Malaysia: market wage rate, women's productivity in the home, and the price of available substitutes for her time at home. The authors support Bunster's point of view that some jobs such as marketing, food processing, and dressmaking are more compatible with child care than are clerical and professional ones.

Time allocation surveys have also been used to examine the

ways in which women organize their daily routine between productive and reproductive activities. King and Evenson (1983), in their study of the time allocation of rural women in the Philippines and the organisation of time between market and domestic work, found that child care and food preparation were the most important home activities of the mother. More important than the size of the family were the ages of children and the amount of parental attention and care they need at different stages in the family cycle. Infants and pre-school children need more parental attention and care than other children. Having an infant significantly decreases the mother's market and leisure time and increases her productive time in the domestic sphere.

Birdsall (1983), also using a time allocation survey, states that the poorer the country, the more hours women work. Married women with young children work more hours than men. Their burden is usually greater because they are responsible for child care and domestic activities and they have to contribute to family income. Women devote their time to a combination of market work and home maintenance, food preparation and child care (Birdsall 1983: 5)

I agree with the point expressed by Buvinic and Birdsall that the national income level of the country affects women's double roles. But one should be careful not to generalize the statement. Even in poor countries, some middle class families have domestic servants. Thus, family income plays an important role in determining women's domestic work. Although the oil boom has enabled many Saudi families to have domestic help, not all families

can afford to hire them. This will be discussed more fully in the following chapters.

Women's Work in Saudi Arabia

Studies of women's work in Saudi society are relatively limited, and most were carried out in Jeddah. Some of these studies concern working women at the work place and the different factors that hinder them from fully participating in the labour force. Other studies examine women's work and its impact on the family.

Al Gadi (1979) has directed his attention to the utilization of women in the labour force in Saudi Arabia in general. He discusses women's work from different social, cultural, religious, and political perspectives. He argues that because of the shortage of human resources in Saudi Arabia, women's work is a vital commodity. Economic development cannot be achieved as long as half of the population is absent from the labour market. Women's work is not only a right of women, according to him, it is the duty of women as citizens to take the place of foreign female workers in the labour force. He indicates that women's work may lead to a decrease in women's biological reproduction, in the short run, but it will benefit the country in the long run. From the Islamic point of view, he argues that Islam guarantees women the right to work even without their husbands' consent.

Assad (1983) investigated the job satisfaction of Saudi

female teachers and administrators in higher education in Jeddah. She focused her study on Saudi women in their working environment: in the women's branch of King Abdul Aziz University and Girls' College in Jeddah. Data were collected from a sample of 258 female teachers and administrators, by means of a structured questionnaire. The study concluded that the degree of job satisfaction is higher among single women than married women. The highest degree of job satisfaction is found among teachers rather than among administrators. Job satisfaction is high among women who describe their job as well defined, or where there are no overlapping responsibilities.

Halawani (1982) explained the problems that face Saudi women at work in Jeddah, and the possible solutions to them, she also investigated Saudi men's attitudes toward women's work by distributing questionnaires among Saudi students who were living in the U.S.A. and some Saudi men who were living in Saudi Arabia. The data show that working women face various problems, the most important of which are the limitation of their choices at work, the shortage of maternity leave, restriction on transportation, and domination of decision-making processes by men. The respondents suggest more jobs for women such as engineering, police work, the judiciary and air hostesses. But the researcher believes that these jobs are not naturally suited to women and conflict with Islamic teaching by exposing women to direct contact with men. Halawani mentions that most Saudi working women do not complain about their double roles and that they do not expect their husbands

to help them with housework. The only thing they want from their husbands is their real approval and understanding, while avoiding putting pressure on them to leave work. Most Saudi men, whether living abroad or in Saudi Arabia, believe that housework is work for women only. Married women should not engage in paid employment because they should take care of their housework and children. If women work, it is their responsibility to maintain a balance between their double roles.

Al Baker (1983) focusses her study on an explanation of the problems of Saudi female teachers in primary schools in Riyadh. She discusses the different professional, social and personal problems that Saudi teachers have. The researcher declares that the female educational system in Saudi Arabia faces two important problems: the high rate of female resignation and the shortage of female employment. The number of women in the labour force is not equivalent to the number of women graduating from universities and female colleges every year. She defines the main obstacles that hinder women from participating in the labour force are Saudi customs and traditions which discourage Saudi married women from leaving their homes to seek work.

Al Saad (1982) is concerned with the role of Saudi women in the second development plan. How do Saudi women conceive of their role in development, in the past, present and in the future, particularly in the field of education and employment? She used a questionnaire to collect her data for working women in Jeddah. Al Saad argued that one of the important obstacles that hinder women

from full participation in the labour force is the misinterpretation of Islam in Saudi Arabia. While Islam encourages women to learn and work, the misinterpretation of Islam in Saudi Arabia prevents women from enjoying their rights. The author declares that working women in Saudi Arabia are facing different problems such as transportation, lack of authority at work, sex segregation in the work place, the shortage of child care centres and kindergartens, and lack of respect by men.

All these studies have been directed at women in the labour market. Other studies have focused on the impact of women's paid work on their domestic responsibilities. Al Khateeb studied the changing role of Saudi women in the family in Jeddah in 1981. Data were collected from 150 employed and non employed women using the questionnaire method. The author argued that woman's work and economic independence give her more power in financial matters and family decision-making. Al Khateeb defined four reasons why women seek employment: to be independent, to gain identity, to meet economic needs, and to make use of increased education.

Nasser and Yaghmour (1984), in their study of the impact of female employment on marital relationships in Jeddah, point out that employed women with less education have fewer marital problems than employed women with higher education. Employed women have more access to decision-making than non-employed women. Spouses in the families of employed women show more understanding of each other than in the other group.

Assad (1977), in her study of role demands of professional

women in Jeddah, compared single and married employed women in different occupations. These include occupations which have the least interaction with men (such as public school teachers), occupations with occasional interaction with men (such as college teachers and administrators and social workers), and occupations with the most interaction with men (such as physicians and interior decorators). Data were collected from 37 educated Saudi women through standardized interviews and a structured questionnaire. The study concluded that married women face more difficulties than single women in combining their two roles. There is no relation between women's interaction with men at work and their constraints in combining their two roles.

My present study aims to investigate the relationship between women's position in the family and their position in the labour market. How does a woman's paid work affect her role in the family? What are the strategies that working women use to manage their double day? How do women from different family background and income levels manage to combine their paid work with their familial responsibilities? How does the assumption that a woman's primary role in life is to be a mother and a housewife affect her opportunities in the labour market? To what extent do women's domestic duties affect their performance of their work? What are the main factors that help or hinder working mothers in combining their two roles? Is it family income, is it the type of work that women do, is it the working hours of a woman, is it having a domestic help, is it the number or age of children?

Women and Islam

Women's status in Islam is a controversial issue. Some authors argue that Muslim women are absolutely subordinated to men and they hold Islam responsible for this situation. Other authors defend Islam by arguing that the religion defines men and women as different but that neither is considered superior or inferior to the other. A third group supports the view that Muslim women are subordinated but argues that the root cause is the varying interpretation of Islam from one country to another according to different socio-economic factors.

White (1978 :53) argues that in relation to women in other developing countries, Muslim women have the lowest rate of contribution to their national incomes. Muslim women have the lowest rates of female literacy and female employment. She also emphasizes that among all Muslim countries, the lowest rates of female education are to be found in those countries which enforce Islamic restrictions. The more conservative the definition of Islam adopted, the more restriction on women. White argues that there are two types of restriction on Muslim women: legal restrictions of inequality based in Islamic teachings and the practice of purdah.

Salman (1978) accuses Islam of responsibility for women's subordination as a result of placing man in a superior position and giving him more power to control women. She states that, according

to Islamic teachings, women are entitled to inherit half the amount a man inherits. In testimony two women are regarded as the equal of one male witness. A man has the right to marry up to four wives at one time. Men can initiate divorce at any time, while woman can divorce only through the courts. The veil and rules of sexual segregation prevent women from participating in public life.

Continuing in this vein, Youssef (1974) emphasizes the low participation rate of Muslim women in the labour force. Muslim women tend to avoid desegregated jobs, which require them to come into direct contact with men. She claims that women belonging to religious minority groups in Middle Eastern countries enjoy more freedom and occupy better jobs than Muslim women in these countries.

The next question that one might ask here is, how does Islam restrict women's participation in the labour force in practice? An answer to this question comes from Smock (1977). She emphasizes that the life of Bengali women reflects two basic principles: sex segregation and the dependence of women. She argues that women in Bangladesh have limited participation in production or in the labour force. Their opportunity to engage in commerce and move about freely is more restricted under the rules of sexual segregation. Female employment is an exception rather than the rule for Bengali women.

All these studies come to the same conclusion that women in Muslim countries are absolutely subjugated persons, and that they have no word in decision-making. They are excluded from public life

and restricted to the private sphere, this is reflected in the fact that they have the lowest female participation rate in the labour market. These writers focus on Islam as a major factor that determines women's condition in society, however, they tend to ignore other social and economic factors.

Some Muslim apologists such as Al Maududi (1976), Sharawi (1983), Harb (1984), Abdul Ati (1971), Halawani (1982), Lemu (1978), and Siddiqi (1959) oppose the previous point of view. They believe that Islam emphasizes that all human beings stand on a footing of equality independent of considerations of race, sex and nationality. They support their theory with the following arguments. Islam explicitly maintains that both male and female are created from one origin and have the same qualities. The Muslim woman does not abandon her name on marriage. The Muslim woman, whether she is single or married, has the right to maintain her own property without any interference from her father or husband. Men and women should have equal opportunities for education. Male and female are equal in law and are expected to receive the same punishment for the same offences. At the same time, they try to justify the different rights of the sexes in inheritance, rules of testimony and marriage on the grounds of the different duties and responsibilities they are expected to perform. Halawani (1982: 11) attempts to justify the inequality between men and women in inheritance as follows:

The reasons for the difference between the inheritance of man and woman depend on the judicial rule which said "profit must correspond to charges and charge to profit".

Thus the Quran sometimes gave a man twice as much as a woman because he is the only responsible person in the family.

These authors focus on women's abstract rights under Islam and ignore the real situation of Muslim women in the practice of every day life. I would stress the need for caution in using the word "equality" between the sexes in Islam. Equality in Islam does not necessarily mean being alike. "Equality" in the West is taken to mean "sameness". However, Islam believes that men and women are different creatures. They are complementary to each other, and no one is absolutely superior or completely inferior to the other. Islam stresses that "complementarity" between the sexes is the basis of their relationship. Siddiqi (1959: 20) states that both sexes are superior to each other in some respects: "The Quran recognizes the superiority of both sexes over each other in some respects, to the extent that men are superior to men and women to men in certain matters."

According to Ahmad (1974) men and women in Islam are complementary to each other; each sex has its roles and duties. Different roles do not necessarily mean that some are superior and other are inferior:

Different roles or functions do not mean difference in basic status as human beings, rose and jasmine, daffodil and tulip are different, but to say that they are unequal is simply confusing the issue" (Ahmad 1974: 17).

I strongly support the point of view of Smith (1980), Bo Utas

(1983), Al-Hibri (1982), Marshall (1980) and Abdel Hay (1982) that Muslim women are subordinated but that Islam per se is not responsible for women's condition in Muslim countries. It is the interpretation of Islam, which varies from one country to another according to different economic, and political systems, which is the source of this subordination. Authors postulate different reasons for variations in the interpretation of Islam.

The questions that one would ask here are, who interprets Islam, and where do these variations come from? Social researchers give different explanations for these questions. Bo Utas (1983) attributes different interpretations to two basic causes:

1. The interpretation and transmission of the sharia has always been in the hands of man.

2. Interpretations of Quran and Sunnah are mixed with customs and traditions.

Al-Hibri (1982) adds other reasons, including patriarchy and philological factors. She declares that the Quran is revealed in Arabic, and the Arabic language is very rich. So it is not uncommon to find sentences that can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and she emphasizes that the patriarchal constitution of knowledge is responsible for Muslim women's subordination.

Patriarchy co-opted Islam after the death of the prophet. This meant, among other things, that many passages in the Qu'ran were interpreted by patriarchy, loosely and out of context, in support of a vicious patriarchal ideology. These interpretations were then handed down to women as God's revealed words. Also, the Arabic language is a very rich language, and thus it is not uncommon to run into sentences that can be interpreted in a variety of ways (Hibri 1982: VII).

From the previous discussion one could ask, is it possible to talk about "the Muslim woman"? Is there really a "typical" Muslim woman? Mernissi (1975) and Youssef (1974) argue that in spite of their political and economic differences, Muslim women consistently have the lowest participation rate in the labour force. The veil and sex segregation rules have deprived women in Muslim countries from achieving full participation in the public sphere.

Some authors such as Marshall (1980), Abdul Hay (1982) and Allaghi (1981) argue that it is difficult to talk about the "Muslim" woman. Muslim women's rights vary from one country to another, and from class to class. Marshall (1980) attributes variations of women rights in Muslim countries to their different political systems. In her study of five North African Muslim countries, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt she argues that differences in female emancipation in these countries are due to a variation in political contingencies. She emphasizes that the traditionalist revival in developing states varies according to their political power. Government leaders in Tunisia and Egypt support sexual equality to some extent and in doing so, they may be weakening their political support. However, their political power and the stability of their regimes help them to challenge traditions. Leaders of Libya, Morocco and Algeria, who are unsure of their countries political stability are unlikely to challenge cultural norms. On the contrary, they may actively support female seclusion as a source of political legitimation.

I have some reservations about Marshall's theory. For

example, Marshall has measured political stability by using different indicators such as: the ability to stay in power for a long period of time, disruptive events, the leader's popularity, and the origin of the elite and political institutions. At the same time the author has mentioned that Sadat faced serious and sustained threats during his political life, indicating that his popularity was not assured. From my point of view, I think the ability to stay in power is not an indicator of a regime's stability, or the president's popularity. It is evident that most developing countries do not have democracy as it exists in most Western countries. Most elections in developing countries are manipulated and many presidents in Third World countries consider themselves rulers for life (Arab Unity Studies Centre 1984).

If we accept Marshall's theory, we would have expected Nasser to have been more supportive of women because he was more popular than Sadat. It is not only the leaders' political power that determines their supportiveness of women's rights and I would argue that popularity is less important than political ideology.

Abdul Hay (1982), in his study of women's participation in public life in the seven Muslim countries of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, argues that socio-economic conditions determine women's rights in all Muslim countries except Saudi Arabia, where women's limited participation in public is due to values and traditions. He stresses that Islam as a religion gives women full rights to participate in public activities.

Another point of view suggests that women tend to have better status in those Muslim societies where there is a separation between political and religious institutions. In this context women have more rights than they do in societies in which religious institutions dominate the political system. In the former societies, there is usually a family code which gives women more rights than in the latter.

Kandiyoti (1985) considers the example of Turkish women and examines the transformation of women's rights in Turkey from "traditionalism" to "secularism". The decline of the Ottoman Empire led to the creation of radical reforms in Turkish society and weakened the political influence of the "Ulama" and their monopoly over the educational system. Two conflicting approaches appeared during the Tanzimat period in the second half of the nineteenth century. The traditionalist position opposed any change in women's rights or improvements in their status. Western ideology suggested that development could not be achieved as long as women were absent from the labour market. During World War I, massive numbers of women participated in the labour force, not only as white collar workers but also as factory workers. The first family code was published in 1917, but it was soon abolished under the pressure of religious minorities. But the woman's issue remained for a long time a source of debate between Turkish westernists and traditionalists. Finally, Ataturk distanced himself from Islam and tried to build up Turkish nationalism. Turkey is one of the few Muslim countries which has a family code.

Tabari (1982), provides another example; She illustrates how Iranian women lost their rights when political and religious institutions united in what is called "Islamic government". She argued that Islam in Iran is used as a blanket rationale to justify the current political system. Under Khomeini's regime, women are pushed out of the labour market, are officially obliged to observe the veil in public, and the minimal age of marriage has become unlimited. Women are in a worse situation than under the Shah's regime.

The same argument is shared by Afshar (1984), who argues that although Islam has guaranteed woman many rights of inheritance, property, and marriage, the interpretation of Islam under the Khomeini regime deprives women of many of these rights. The "realisation of human ideals" in Iran nowadays places women in the domestic sphere and prevents them from enjoying the independence given to them by the Quran.

Another position emerges from the literature on Muslim women which argues that although Muslim women may not have public authority, they nonetheless have power. Women use their own strategies to influence men and affect their decision-making. Maher (1974) argues that women in Morocco have power in the private sector through their role in arranging marriages. Moroccan women not only choose brides for their kinsmen but they also carry out marriage rituals.

Bybee (1978) adds that although Muslim women in rural areas are excluded from public life, they have great power in family

decision-making by using their own strategies in collecting information through women's circles and by manipulating men and influencing their decisions.

Webster (1984) suggests that studies of women in Muslim countries should look to the inner forces in the social structures that give women an influence in public affairs. Webster argues that women in Muslim countries have great power over household affairs. A woman can use different strategies such as not showing hospitality in offering food to male guests, by keeping the house unclean, and by letting children make noise in the presence of male guests to dishonor a man.

I would argue that Islam in itself is not responsible for the subordination of Muslim women. Women in early Islam enjoyed more rights than in most Muslim countries today. Women in early Islam used to work in trading, and attend mosques for religious purposes and in the pursuit of knowledge. They participated in war as fighters and nurses and had the same access to religious teachings as men. Aisha, the prophet's wife, was herself a very learned woman. She used to recite the "hadiths". During the Caliphs' period, her advice was sought in political matters. During Caliph Omar's rule, Samraa Bent Naheik and Shefaa Bent Abd-allah were appointed in hesbah, and given the power to punish offenders. Hesbah was a high position through which trading was monitored that was usually held by men (Harb 1982).

It must be stressed that women's rights in Muslim countries today are different from one country to another, and from class to

class. Thus, it is difficult to talk about "the Muslim" woman, since there is no "average" Muslim woman. Women's rights in Muslim countries vary from society to society, and in the same society may differ historically, in response to different political and economic transformations. With the absence of a written family code in most Muslim countries, women's rights vary according to different interpretations of Islam. In Saudi Arabia, women's rights vary from family to family according to wealth, education, and the region of residence.

Veiling

One of the most important issues related to women in Islam is the practice of veiling. This raises a number of different debates among Muslim scholars. Are Muslim women free to go out in public places or not? If they are free, do they have to be veiled? What kind of veil should they wear?

Some orthodox Muslims argue that women should be veiled and secluded. They should not leave their homes except for necessary activities (Jamal 1985) For this group, women's only job in life is to be a mother and housewife. Muslim women should not seek paid work, unless they are in need of money.

Some Muslim reformists oppose this point of view. They argue that women's seclusion is restricted to the female relatives of the prophet Muhammad and that ordinary Muslim women can participate in public activities. Islam does not ask women to be confined to

their homes or to be absolutely dependent on men. Islam gives women the right to hold property and be economically independent. If a woman has to be secluded, how can she enjoy her rights? Siddique (1980) and Abdul Hay (1982) insist that Islam makes no distinction between men and women in terms of duties, rewards, and punishment. Women are encouraged to be productive and independent under Islamic teachings. A Muslim woman can participate in public activities and work at any job providing she is modest in her dress and behaviour.

This leads us to another question which is, what is modest dress for Muslim women? It is revealed in the Quran that Muslim women should not show her ornaments except to her close kin, whom she could not marry.

"And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and not display their ornaments except what appears thereof, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or.." (Quran, xxiv 30-31)

Most schools of Islam such as Shafi, Hanifi, and Maliki argue that a Muslim woman should cover her entire body, except her face and hands, in public places. According to the Hanbali school, a woman should be fully covered except for her face (Siddique 1980: 105).

The concept "veil" as it is used in the literature is very ambiguous. Some writers used it to mean covering the face and the whole body completely, others used it to mean covering the face

while leaving the eyes uncovered such as *burqu*.

In the literature, the veil has been studied from different perspectives. Mikhail (1981) has discussed the veil from a historical point of view. She argues that the veil was not an exclusive Islamic practice. Byzantine and Persian women in pre-Islamic societies used to observe the veil. Women in the Arabian Peninsula were introduced to the veil through their contact with Persian and Byzantine culture. She claims that in the first century of the Islamic era, women did not observe the veil. Women actively participated in public life. It was in the second century that the harem system began to develop. The veil was first observed by women from rich families and was later imitated by less affluent women. Seclusion and veiling also exist among non-Muslim women in Hindu culture in the present day.

Continuing in this vein, Webster (1984) argues that the social atmosphere and insecurity in the Arabian Peninsula after the Caliphal period contributed to the spread of the veil. She also identified several factors such as fundamentalism, nationalism, and family honour and wealth that help to spread the veil in most Muslim countries nowadays.

Jeffery (1979) in her study of purdah among Muslim women in India, has drawn a distinction between the practice of purdah among Hindu and Muslim women. For Muslim women, purdah means the complete concealment of women after puberty in relation to all men except very close kin. For Hindus, on the other hand, purdah is observed after marriage, and in relation to the husband's older

male kin. Hindu women do not veil themselves in public places, unless their husbands or their husbands' relatives are present. Jeffery indicates that since not all Muslim women could afford to practice purdah and female seclusion, there are other tactics of concealment by which a woman can keep herself away from strange men and can be socially acceptable to them. Jeffery states that purdah is not only a matter of dress; there are also certain forms of modest behaviour that women should pursue.

In her study of Jeddah, Altorki (1986) argues that the veil is not a static phenomenon. Women from older generations were very strict in observing the veil in the presence of strange men. Although people still indicate that removing the veil is against Islamic teaching, the younger generation is not very strict in observing the practice. Married women of the younger generation have greater liberty in associating with men who visit the house more frequently than older women.

Some authors have studied the veil and its relation to female sexuality in Muslim countries. For example, Mernissi (1985) emphasizes that in societies, where seclusion of women is observed, the implicit theory of female sexuality is an active one. While in societies where there is no seclusion of women, female sexuality is considered passive. She argues that in Islamic ideology women are seen to be more active than men and more capable of controlling their sexuality than men. Thus, in Muslim countries, the purpose of the veil is to protect men from women's *fetnah* (sexual attractiveness). According to Muslim ideology, women's *fetnah* is

irresistable. The veil is designed to protect men, and not women, from their weakness.

Following the same approach, Perssenin (1980) argues that veiling and sex segregation in Saudi Arabia is related to sexuality. Saudi culture values male sexuality and encourages it. Male virility is praised through encouraging early marriages, having many children, and polygamy. The author argues that seclusion and veiling in Saudi Arabia is designed to protect women not from their weakness, but from male aggressive sexuality.

Much of the literature about women in Muslim countries reflects western attitudes towards the veil. Most western feminists take a position on the veil which may be seen to be the result of the ethnocentric assumption that where women are segregated or veiled, they are completely subjugated to men (White 1978; Smock 1977). The concepts of the "veil" or "purdah" are related, in the western mind, to the seclusion of women behind walls in the harem's domain. According to western culture, the practice of the veil does not only mean segregation between sexes but it also implies an inferior status for women. Veiled women are expected to be subordinated, passive, and helpless. Few authors try to look at the veil from the indigenous point of view.

Those who have examined the veil from a local point of view often argue that it can be regarded as a source of honour among women. Abu zahra (1982) emphasizes that women in the village of Sidi Ameur in Tunisia use the veil because it is a sign of family honour. The veil is used as a criterion of differentiation among

two factions of the village. The seclusion of Zawiya women is considered as a prestigious sign for their male kin. Thus, as soon as Ramada men become wealthier, they also tend to seclude and veil their women. The author argues that women are always used as an indicator of superiority of one group over the other.

Al Manaa (1981) indicates that although sex segregation in Saudi Arabia restricts women's full participation in the labour market, sexual segregation may be necessary in Saudi society because it has encouraged men from traditional families to send their daughters to schools and to seek paid jobs. It will enable women to occupy a parallel position to men in the labour force. It allows women to be responsible for women's programmes, and it gives women the opportunity to be trained and develop their skills.

Many studies of the veil in Muslim countries indicate that women's bodies are always seen as symbolic of the nation. During political crises or rapid social change, women are encouraged to put on the veil as a symbol of the country's honour. Cole and Keddie (1986) argue that the veil varies from one country to another according to time, place, class and religious sect. Keddie has focused her study on women's participation in public activities in Iran over a long period of time. She argues that in the early days of Twelve Shi'ism, women had high religious and educational prestige; they were close in position to male religious leaders. In the nineteenth century, women were leading figures in riots and demonstrations. During the Iranian revolution of 1978/79, women's organizations were directed to take political action against the

Shah's regime. After Khomeini's regime, fundamentalists encouraged women to return to the purity of Islam. A general protest has been directed against western dress and women are encouraged to observe the veil in public places.

Rezig (1983) supports this point of view in her study of the veil in Algeria. She indicates that during the colonial period, the veil gained a significance for Algerians. It became the symbol of the nation and its unity. Since women's participation in the revolution was important in achieving victory, women were encouraged to struggle side by side with men. After independence, the political leaders in Algeria tend to glorify the motherhood role and women were encouraged to observe the veil.

Ahmed (1982) in her study of the veil in the four Muslim countries of Turkey, Egypt, Algeria and South Yemen, argues that there is a relationship between the veil and the general policy of the country. For example, in Turkey, Ataturk played an important role in supporting women's emancipation in the labour force. Ataturk realized that female employment was important for modernization and development of the country. Thus he encouraged Muslim thinkers to interpret Islam in a progressive way, which has enabled women to be fully integrated in the Turkish labour force. In Algeria during the French period, while the French tried to persuade Algerian women to abandon the veil, Algerian men encouraged women to be secluded and use the veil. Women tend to use the veil wherever men considered it useful for them. After independence, women were encouraged to go back to their homes.

Unveiling was considered a temporary stage for achieving victory, and once this had been realized, women were expected to be more confined to the private sphere.

Tabari (1982:25) explains the retreat of Iranian women to the veil as a symbol of resistance against the outside world. The veil has become a distinct identity for the Muslim woman. It provides women with a different conception of themselves. This retreat into the purity of Islam is not seen as a reflection of the past but as a positive road for the future.

I would argue that Islam encourages women to participate fully in public places, provided that they are modest in their dress and behaviour. Complete veiling may hinder a woman from enjoying her rights in maintaining her property, providing testimony, and doing her Islamic duties. While praying, women are not asked to cover their faces and during the *Hijj* (pilgrimage) women should not cover their faces, otherwise, they could pay a penalty.

The ideology of the veil in Saudi Arabia is related to sexuality. Sexuality is highly praised in Islam because it maintains the stability of the society and is a source of satisfaction on the individual level. But to organize this relationship, Islam makes it clear that having a sexual relation outside the institution of marriage is considered a sin. The social reproductive function of women puts a great emphasis on women's bodies. A woman's body and not a man's is regarded as a symbol of sexuality. Thus, a woman's body should be veiled and

protected to maintain the social order. Paradoxically, however, although the veil aims to curb sexuality, in reality it feeds and strengthens sexuality. It makes sexuality the core of people's thoughts. The more a woman is veiled, the more she becomes attractive. According to Saudi thinking, unveiled women lose their femininity; they are virtually sexless.

Conclusion

The subject of this study led me to cover a wide range of literature about women in general, and about women's double roles both in developed and developing countries. This literature indicates that gender differences vary from society to another. Women's subordination is not a static condition genetically determined. The degree of women's subordination differs from society to another according to economic and social systems in the society. Women's double role is almost a general phenomenon in both developed and developing countries, but the degree of the material constraints that women face vary from society to another according to national wealth, and the mode of production in these countries.

Islam is not in itself responsible for Muslim women's subordination, but the interpretation of Islam which is politically and economically determined is an important factor in maintaining and legitimating sexual inequality. It can be argued that the veil has some negative and some positive implications for women. The

veil and sexual segregation enable Saudi women to live their own lives apart from men. They give women an autonomy and a kind of solidarity not enjoyed by many women in desegregated societies. In the labour market, women do not need to compete directly with men to be employed. On the other hand, women are not given the same opportunities as men in education or employment. Women are restricted to certain fields and to certain jobs that are assumed to suit their nature.

Reviewing previous theoretical debates, we notice that not all studies carried out in Western countries are applicable to developing countries. Because of cultural differences many studies of Muslim women carried out by Westerners reflect ethnocentric attitudes. This encourages a new trend in anthropology for local researchers to investigate these societies and how they conceive of their lives. This is what this study aims to do.

Chapter III

Methodology

As a female researcher in a sex segregated society, I had to consider all the constraints that might restrict my fieldwork. I found it necessary to carry out a pilot study to determine the most appropriate method for collecting the information required, under the prevailing circumstances. Two visits for this purpose were made to Jeddah and Riyadh, two of the biggest cities in Saudi Arabia. I interviewed ten working women in each city with different marital statuses (divorced, widowed, unmarried and married) and with different income levels. During my pilot study I tried to gain as much information as possible about Saudi Arabia in general, and Saudi working women in particular. I developed and tested a series of open-ended questions to serve as an interview guide for the research. During this stage, some questions were added, and others were omitted. After the pilot study, I chose Riyadh as the study area because of its status as the capital city. It also has the largest share of Saudi working women. It was also of particular interest that Riyadh is regarded by most Saudi people as one of the most conservative cities in the kingdom.

When I first began my pilot study of working women, I was

constantly asked, which working women do you mean? Working women or working mothers? By working women people mean unmarried women, married women without children, widowed women, and divorced women. My attention was drawn to the distinction that Saudi people use to distinguish female workers. Most Saudi people think that all the different categories of women mentioned can work, except mothers who are supposed to be confined to their homes and not to seek a paid employment. Finally, I decided that working mothers should be the focus of this study. One of the main reasons for the decision to study only working mothers was that they are frequently accused of being neglectful and unproductive. There is always pressure on Saudi working mothers to withdraw from the labour force - to leave their paid work and commit themselves to their domestic responsibilities. Studying this category could help me to find out the reasons why this group of women is not expected to work. Why is it more acceptable for widowed and divorced women to work even when they have children? To what extent do mothers manage to combine their double roles and what are the factors that help or hinder them in holding their two roles as mothers and workers?

During my fieldwork, I interviewed sixty-eight respondents but since Riyadh was chosen as the study area, the ten initial cases from Jeddah were excluded. And as working mothers were to be studied, cases of divorced women and widows were also excluded. Two teachers withdrew at the halfway stage of the questioning because they could not find time to finish my interviews. Since I could get information only from people who were willing to cooperate with

the tiring interviews, the number of completed interviews provided me with fifty respondents. Data was collected in a total of ten months of fieldwork in Riyadh.

There were two basic methods available to me for the collection of my data: the survey or the open-ended interview. A survey would have been easier, quicker and capable of studying a larger number of cases. But it might not give the information needed. Interviews with open-ended questions, on the other hand, are similar to survey methodology in seeking the same information from all cases, but the sample studied is usually smaller in size since interviews are more time consuming and are more demanding for interviewer and respondents. The information obtained is usually more comprehensive and penetrating than survey results. Some of the survey based research previously carried out on Saudi society such as Al-Eidan (1985) has highlighted the fact that not all answers received are relevant because either people misunderstand the questions, or because respondents are not willing to give the correct answers. Part of the reason for the lack of social research in Saudi Arabia based on intensive interview methods is that people are not familiar with social research in general and with interview techniques in particular. It is not an easy task to convince people to talk about their familial affairs and private matters with someone whom they have not known before.

In spite of its statistical usefulness, the survey is not the most appropriate method in social research for handling information on values, the perception of social roles, or conceptions of social

relationships. Many anthropologists and sociologists argue that the in-depth interview is more suitable for social research dealing with social relations or cultural values. For example, Elizabeth Bott and her team of psychoanalysts and social psychologists in their study reported in Families and Social Networks (1971) tried to study the average English family. This kind of study, which is quite relevant to my study topic, depends basically on the in depth interview to collect its data. Bott used a particular mixture of participant observation and intensive interview techniques. She followed anthropological method in studying the family as a whole, but she differed in using interview techniques more than direct observation, and in using a local group as the unit of the study instead of the society or small community as a whole. Since the aim of the present research was to collect a global picture of Saudi working women's lives, and their conceptions of their dual roles, the survey method was not thought to be the most appropriate method of study. Thus, the intensive interview was the preferred method.

I collected my data by using an interview guide. One of the points I had to consider was whether or not to use open-ended questions. A closed question could give definite answers by restricting the respondents' choices to certain categories, but it might not give all the information required. Thus, open-ended questions were used because they give respondents the chance to speak more freely and in a relatively unrestricted way. A copy of the questionnaire used is included in the appendix. Many questions in the interview guide lead to further questions and give more

detailed information about respondents.

The Representativeness of the Sampling

Ideally, it would have been preferable to have a random sample of Saudi working women. But the absence of any nominal listing of all working women in Riyadh, and the shortage of official statistics about Saudi working women, made it impossible to undertake a random sampling procedure. The first statistical information about the actual distribution of women in the labour force was published in 1986. This indicated that the majority of women in waged employment in Saudi Arabia are concentrated in white collar jobs(see Table VI.6).

However, efforts were made to secure a systematic sample from the range of female jobs in Riyadh. As female jobs in Saudi Arabia are well defined, I tried to ensure that my sample included all available jobs for women. I selected my fifty cases from education, the health service, social work, banking and private business. I also made sure to interview women from different positions in the institutional hierarchy. For example, at schools, I interviewed headmistresses, teachers and clerks. In hospitals, I interviewed doctors, and nurses. In the banks, I interviewed managers and bank tellers (see Table III.1)

Female schools in Riyadh are divided into two separate female authorities, East and West. I interviewed equal numbers from both sections and in different districts of Riyadh such as Al-Malaz,

Airport street, Sulemaniah, Olayah, Al-Nassem, Al Rewdah, Al-Khazzan, Hellat ben Dayel, and Manfouhna. These districts correspond to different socio-economic levels. The spatial layout of Riyadh permitted me to select across the socio-economic range. I also interviewed women with different levels of education, from intermediate level to Ph.D level (see Table III.2).

Although the research sample was not random, there were certain requirements within it. All working women interviewed were Saudi citizens and were expected to have been working for at least two years at the time of the study, which enabled them to have some attachment to their work. They were expected to be married; divorced or widowed women were not included. They were the mothers of at least one child. They were expected to have at least an intermediate educational certificate.

Respondents' ages range from twenty-one to forty-two. One of the noticeable things in Saudi society is that most working women are under the age of thirty-six (see Table III.3). Female public schools started in 1960, and the entrance age to school in Saudi Arabia is six years, with the result that the first cohort of women to graduate from Saudi colleges was in 1976. This means that most of these graduates were thirty-two years old at the time of the study.

The period that respondents had spent in the labour force ranged from two to twenty years (see Table III.4). Female employment is a recent phenomenon in Saudi society. Most working women have been working less for than ten years. Those who have

been working for more than fifteen had generally studied outside Saudi Arabia.

Respondents' children ranged from one to six in number. The fifty respondents have one hundred and thirty children between them (see Table III.5)

One of the issues I considered in choosing my sample was family status. I found it difficult to apply the concept "class" as it is used in Western countries to Saudi society and its culture. Cooper's (1979) definition of class is "a group of people with certain common traits: descent, education, accent, similarity of occupation, wealth, moral attitudes, friends, hobbies, accommodation, and with generally similar ideas, who meet each other on equal terms, and regard themselves as belonging to one group" (Cooper 1979: 14). This definition is difficult to apply to Saudi society in this transitional stage. The society is passing through a situation of rapid change. Family affiliation, education, occupation and wealth are not always correlated in Saudi society.

"Traditional" Saudi society in Riyadh is a tribal society, and tribal affiliation still constitutes the major basis of differentiation between the various ethnic groups. In contrast, Rugh (1973) distinguished three "classes" in Saudi society. According to this author, the upper class consists of the royal family and its collateral branches, along with a few leading tribal sheikhs and top *ulama* (learned men). The new middle class consists of merchants, traders, landowners, judges, lawyers and

teachers. And finally, the lower class is made up of nomadic bedouin, semi-nomadic herdsmen, unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the government and the private sector.

Although, I think that Saudi society is moving towards a market-oriented economy and differences in income levels have become wider, I found it difficult to apply the stratification model proposed by Rugh to Saudi society. The sheikhs were usually the wealthiest people in the tribe, but in this transitional stage, changes have occurred in the social hierarchy. Some people of non-sheikhly origin have emerged as wealthy families. The distribution of wealth among members of urban family groups have made the families of some sheikhs less wealthy than other members of the same families. The spread of education has meant that the majority of jobs are achieved, not ascribed as they were before. Some members of poor families have had the chance to improve their education and now occupy better jobs than their fathers did. The sudden increase of wealth has given a chance to a few traders, who do not have a tribal affiliation, to become some of the richest businessmen in the world. Also, the sudden increase of land prices has meant that some landowners, who cannot read or write, are now among the rich families of Riyadh. Thus, a certain amount of social mobility is beginning to occur and a change in the basis of status identification has taken place. I would argue that it is very difficult to analyse Saudi society in class terms at this stage. It is difficult, for example, to make a clear distinction between nomadic bedouin and non-bedouin people in Riyadh. Many

nomadic bedouin people in Saudi society have relatives or sometimes brothers who are living in urban areas. Many Saudi soldiers in the army have families who still live in the desert. Most Saudi families in Riyadh were formally nomadic bedouin; even the royal family itself was at one time a nomadic bedouin group.

Thus, I have tried to avoid using the concept of class but I always consider the importance of wealth in facilitating women's double's roles, and the sample includes women from families of different status. By using the word "status", I am referring to income characteristics only. The income of respondents varied from less than four thousand Saudi Riyals monthly, to more than thirty thousands Riyals per month.

My sample included forty-one Najdi women and nine Hejazi women. Of these nine Hejazi women three are married to Najdi men. The forty-one Najdi contained representatives of the different ethnic groups in Riyadh, *kabeyli* and *khadeiry* - terms that will be explained more fully in the next chapter. Therefore I feel confident that the sample is to a very large extent representative of the wider situation of Saudi working women and covers different educational, occupational, and socio-economic levels.

To carry out my interviews, I had to ask for official permission at female institutions to be allowed to conduct my research. As most female institutions are directed by men, I had to ask my husband or male kin to arrange this. After getting permission, I approached the directress of every institution and explained to her the aim of my research. I then asked her to

introduce me to some of the working mothers in the institution. Most respondents were suggested by the directresses of female institutions, but it was not compulsory for them to cooperate. Thus, I interviewed only those who were willing to cooperate and who were interested in the research itself. A few cases were interviewed through personal contacts.

I made an appointment with each respondent in advance. Most of the interviews were conducted at the workplaces of the women, but some were carried out in their houses. Because the interviews were quite long, and the spare time that working women could give during their work was limited, the interview was discontinued whenever the respondents wished and arrangements made for a continuation at a later stage.

The total interview time for each woman ranged from four to eight hours. Most cases took two or three sittings to complete. Teachers in particular took a much longer time to be interviewed. This is because of the shortage of time at the work place for long interviews. Sometimes it was impossible to interview teachers for more than thirty minutes per day. I spent the rest of the day with the women. I shared their tea and had a chat with them. These informal conversations gave me the chance to develop a detailed picture of working women's lives and strengthened the relationship between myself and my respondents. Since most respondents did not welcome the idea of using a taperecorder during the interview, a considerable amount of time had to be spent in making detailed notes during and after the interviews.

During my fieldwork, I also interviewed ten elderly women to develop a fuller picture of women's lives in pre-oil Saudi society and their contribution to family subsistence. In this case I used unstructured interviews which aimed to get as much information as possible about Saudi society and women's roles before the discovery of oil.

Several visits were also carried out to interview senior female officials in the female civil service and female education authority to develop a fuller picture of female employment in general.

Because of rules of sex segregation in Saudi society, I did not have access to the men's world. Thus, all the information collected represents women's point of view only. All questions were translated by the researcher from Arabic to English after the fieldwork. Data were analysed manually because most respondents' answers were long and unstructured, and therefore difficult to analyse by computer, and the limited number of cases did not necessitate this.

The Interview Experience

During my fieldwork, I faced some constraints. For example, some respondents assumed that the research was being carried out to supply services for working women such as nurseries and day care centres. Efforts were made to convince them that the information obtained was only for the sake of research and it had nothing to do

with questions of service provision. Also, questions about familial relations and income were understandably not welcomed by some respondents. Since most respondents were not familiar with this kind of social research, I was always asked, "Why are you concerned with private matters?" or "Your questions are very personal." but the long term open-ended methods helped me to develop a good relationship with respondents and to allay these fears.

As a female researcher in a sex segregated society where most government offices are staffed by men, I found it very difficult to obtain all the information I required without my male kin's support. I had to have a man obtain the information required. Also, my movements were very restricted. I always had to have a driver to drive me from place to place even over short distances.

During my fieldwork, I was always looked upon and treated in the context of my male kin relations. For example, in one of the hospitals I visited, I explained to the director the aim of the research and my desire to interview some doctors and nurses in the hospital. After explaining everything, his reply was, "Because your husband is my friend, I am going to help you." On another occasion, I was told, "Because your brother-in-law is my close friend I am going to help you." Even my access to banks was made through male kin. In these circumstances, it is not enough to be a researcher or to be serious in your aims to be helped or given the information required; you have to know somebody or be kin to someone through whom the relevant contact can be made.

Facilities for Fieldwork

On the other hand, being a woman also facilitated my task of conducting the research in some ways. It is almost impossible for a male researcher to carry out the kind of research which requires direct interaction with women in a sex segregated society such as Saudi Arabia.

Being a native anthropologist has its positive and its negative consequences. On the one hand, it enabled me to have more understanding of Saudi culture and values. I also had access to many female institutions. I was given official permission to enter female institutions which I think would have been difficult for non-Saudi women to obtain. Even some Saudi colleagues were not given permission to carry out research at female schools. As a Saudi woman married to someone from the area of research, I was accepted by most respondents and this facilitated my task. The fact that I was working in Riyadh before coming to England, provided me with good relations with some working women in different institutions, and this helped me to be always looked upon and treated as one of them.

On the other hand, because daily life is very familiar to the native, he or she may not be able to observe things as a non-native would do, and many things may be taken for granted and pass unnoticed. However, since I was brought up outside Saudi Arabia, and had lived abroad for some time, it was more possible to develop

a sense of observation and to question things which might otherwise have passed unnoticed.

Most working women whom I interviewed gave me a friendly welcome and were very open with me. As the time spent with each one ranged from four to eight hours, and most of this time was passed with respondents talking freely about themselves and their families, they discussed very private matters with me. Some respondents described the interview as psychoanalytical research. Some of them told me that our discussions drew their attention to aspects of their lives they had never considered before.

Despite the growth of research on women since 1970 more studies are needed about women's own perceptions and experience. How do women see their own lives? How do they conceive of their roles? What women are saying is not always the same as what they are doing, or what they are really feeling? It is not an easy task to see the difference between these three levels, but at least it gives us more understanding of women's lives as they see them from inside, not according to other people's judgements from outside. This is what this study has tried to do.

Table III.1
Respondents' Distribution in Female Jobs.

Institutions	Respondents
Number Educational sector.	30
Health services.	11
Social services	4
Banking.	2
Private Business.	3
Total	50

Table III.2
Respondents' Educational Level.

Education	Respondents
Intermediate certificate	7
Teaching diploma	5
Nursing diploma	5
Secondary certificate	3
Bachelor's Degree	22
M.A.	6
Ph.D	2
Total	50

Table III.3
Respondents' Age.

Years	Respondents
1-24	
25-29	17
30-34	1
35-39	11
40-44	1
45-49	
50-54	
55-59	
60-64	
65-69	
70-74	
75-79	
80-84	
85-89	
90-94	
95-99	
Total	50

Table III.4
Respondents' Working Years.

Working years	Respondents.
2- 4	7
4- 6	9
6- 8	10
8- 10	7
10- 12	8
12- 14	3
14- 16	4
16- 18	0
18- 20	0
20 +	2
Total	50

Table III.5
Respondents' Children.

Number of Children	Respondents
1	14
2	11
3	11
4	9
5	1
6	2
Total	50

Chapter IV

Pre-oil Saudi Society

Recent anthropological work has looked at the costs and benefits of "development" and its impact on women's lives, and has asked whether women are "better" or "worse" off than before. What are the effects of economic development on female employment in developing countries? This question cannot be answered without a detailed historical analysis of women's lives. This has not often been done in sufficient detail, and yet it is difficult to understand the changes in working women's lives today without an understanding of the social and historical background of the society as a whole.

Thus, the aim of this chapter is to throw light on women's lives from 1902, when King Abdul Aziz succeeded in capturing Riyadh with forty of his followers and signalled the rise of the modern Saudi state, to the beginning of the period of oil exploitation in 1947. Although the discovery of oil occurred in 1938, World War II delayed the full exploitation of oil resources until 1947. I focus my attention on this period, because although I believe that the real change in women's lives took place with the influx of wealth in Saudi Arabia, one should not underestimate the

importance of certain political changes that had taken place before the discovery of oil, such as the Wahabi movement in Najd and the unification of the kingdom under the Al-Saud family. These events had not only affected Najdi women's lives, particularly in urban areas, before the discovery of oil, but are also still affecting women's participation in "development" after the discovery of oil.

The data for this chapter were collected through interviews with elderly women of different family statuses who were living in Riyadh and its surroundings, as well as from literature about Saudi women during that period. Most of these women were living in agricultural communities before the discovery of oil. At this time Riyadh itself, despite its political importance as the capital of the Al-Saud family, was only a small city isolated in the middle of the desert, and the way of life in Riyadh was almost the same as in other towns of the Najd region. With the great urban expansion of Riyadh today, it is very difficult to locate the native people of Riyadh in this huge city, of almost one million inhabitants. Thus I interviewed elderly women from the Najd region generally to collect as much information as possible about these women's former lives as they lived and experienced them. Providing history with reference to a certain year does not mean that social change happened suddenly after that date, but two stages in oil production can be distinguished. The first stage covers the period from 1947 to 1973, during which period oil production was relatively limited. Changes were gradual and inconspicuous during this stage. The second stage was from 1973 until 1985. This period has witnessed a

sudden increase in oil prices and oil production. The influx of wealth has encouraged the government to establish a series of five year development plans which have affected almost all aspects of life in Saudi society. These stages will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Social and Historical Background

The western part of the Arabian Peninsula was the scene of the birth of Islam, the religion revealed by Gabriel to Muhammed in A.D.610. Before his death in A.D.633, Muhammed had succeeded in unifying all the bedouin tribes in the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Islam and almost all the inhabitants of the Peninsula had become Muslims. During the subsequent Caliphal period, Islam spread to many different parts of the world.

For hundreds of years before the emergence of Islam, the desert climate had obliged most of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula to lead a nomadic way of life. Three ways of life could be distinguished in this area. A majority of nomadic bedouin used to move from place to place herding their camels, goats and sheep. A few settled in farming and trading communities, and a semi-nomadic life existed on the fringes of the farming settlements. Bedouins always looked upon their way of life with glorification and pride, and they looked down on the farmers and townsmen *al-hadar*. For them, nomadic pastoralism was the ideal way of life because it demanded courage and bravery, and it gave

them freedom of movement and independence which other rural and urban people lacked. The tribe is the main form of social organization in the Arabian Peninsula. There were about 10 major tribes with a membership of 100 or more subtribes. Kinship was the main principle that held members of the tribe together. The government's laws in the cities and towns have not always extended to govern bedouin relationships. The tribe had its own values and regulations which were respected by all members of the tribe. Breaking these rules exposed the offender to severe punishment from the tribe.

Each tribe had a roughly defined territory within which it controlled the pasture and water sources, and through which other tribes could pass only with its permission or by using force. Feud and warfare were common among these tribes. Habib (1970) argues that raiding constituted a major part of the bedouin way of life; they engaged in raids for sport and loot. AlTorki (1986) on the other hand, argues that it is very simplistic to assume that bedouin raid for the sake of raiding; the poverty of the area, at that time, obliged the bedouin in Najd to raid to survive.

Most literature about the bedouin in the Arabian Peninsula such as Wahba (1961), Habib (1970) and Al Mana (1980), argue that the nomadic way of life created fierce, intolerant and politically unreliable men. Their first loyalty was to their tribe rather than their monarch. Al Mana (1980: 25) described the tribesmen in the Arabian Peninsula as follows:

The tribesmen were fiercely independent and owed no

allegiance to any outsider. They had immense respect for strength, courage, leadership and luck; a man who had all these qualities in abundance might for a time unite several tribes or tribal sections behind him and start to carve out a kingdom for himself. But victory was usually selfdefeating because once the great man's followers had won sufficient booty, they tended to disappear into the desert with their loot. If a leader was to retain his supporters he had to keep fighting and keep winning; if he lost battles or stopped to draw breath, his followers would vanish through disappointment or boredom.

The tribe was a political organization which had its internal hierarchy. The social hierarchy in the pre-oil society was divided into four categories: The sheikhs were the wealthiest people in the tribe and occupied the apex of the status structure. Next in rank were the other members of the tribe from the *kabeyli* category. *Kabeyli* referred to persons who could trace descent links to the putative founders of the tribe and in this sense, could be said to form the tribal "nobility". Najdi people gave a great emphasises to the inheritance of the lineage name, which demonstrated one's *kabeyli* status. Next came the members of *khadeiry* stratum - people without descent connections, such as immigrants from another country settled under the protection of the locally dominant tribe. The main discriminating features between these status categories were in occupation, marriage and power. There were certain jobs which were thought to be unsuitable for *Kabeyli* men, such as manual work, carpentry, butchering, blacksmithing and drumming. Intermarriage was virtually prohibited between the *kabeyli* and *khadeiry* groups. *Kabeyli* men usually also had more power in decision making than *khadeiry* men. Lowest in rank

were the slaves. They were originally brought from Africa to the Arabian Peninsula through slave trading and had been settled there for a long time. Slavery was abandoned by King Faisal in 1963.

Riyadh became the capital of the second Saudi Dynasty in 1842, when the Al-Saud family, who were living in Diriyah, chose it as the centre of their political organization. But with the exile of the Al-Saud family to Kuwait in 1890, Riyadh lost its power, and was placed under the power of their rivals the Al-Rashid family, the leaders of Hail city at that time. In 1902 King Abdel Aziz succeeded in invading Riyadh and began the establishment of the modern Saudi state. Because of the shortage of economic resources at that period, Riyadh as a capital of the Saudi regime was very simple; there was little difference between Riyadh and other urban communities in Najd. Riyadh was isolated in the desert; it was hardly visited by any foreigners. It had little contact with the outside world. Al Mana (1980: 34) describes Riyadh in 1926 as follows:

It was encircled by an outer mud wall, about twenty feet high, in which were set mighty gates at the north, south, east and west. The city was small, probably not more than a few hundred yards across even at its widest point. Inside it was a maze of twisting streets, some so narrow that it was difficult for two men to walk abreast down them. The only open space was the central market, dominated on one side by a large mosque and on the other by the palace which Al Rashid had usurped. Nearby was a tiny market-place, reserved for the womenfolk. All the buildings in the town were of the same adobe construction as the walls. About half had an upper floor but the rest were all single-storey dwellings. Their walls were completely blank on the outside except for an occasional tiny, protruding window.

Al Mana indicates that Riyadh was smaller and simpler than Mecca and it may be for this reason that it was chosen to be the capital of Al-Saud. There were none of the vices that flourish in other urban areas such as smoking or music. It was more suitable for the Wahabi teachings, than other parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Wahabi Movement

After the death of the four Caliphs, Muslim society deteriorated and lost the asceticism that characterized early Islamic days. Religious practices often deviated from a strict interpretation of the Koran. In respect of this decline, a fundamentalist movement emerged in Najd under the leadership of Muhammed Ibn Abdel Wahab. Ibn Wahab was born in Najd in Uyinah town near Riyadh in 1703. He was the son and grandson of Hanbali judges. He found that people in most parts of the Arabian Peninsula had turned away from the original content of Islam. Syncretism prevailed, and the worship of saints diverted the people from the Islamic teachings.

According to Wahabism "everything considered innovative *bida* was prohibited on this ground, including music, silk, tobacco, wine and the worship of trees, stones and saints' tombs" (Hopwood 1982: 33). Women should not normally appear in public places and if they must appear, they should be completely veiled (Knauerhase 1975: 24). Ibn Wahab tried to spread his teachings in different parts of

the Arabian Peninsula, but the combination of time, place and circumstances were not auspicious for him to succeed. Hopwood (1982) has argued that Ibn Wahab failed to convince the traders in Basra to follow his teachings because the conditions of uncertainty and dissatisfaction that are required for any ideological movement to succeed were not fulfilled there. Ibn Wahab kept on trying to spread his message, and he slowly gathered followers in his village. When he discovered that his opponents were planning to kill him, he moved to the neighbouring town of Diriyah, the area of residence of the Al-Saud family. He gained their support and protection. AlTorki (1986) argues that the uncertainty of the political system and the instability of the economic life of bedouin in Najd made the conditions suitable for the Wahabi movement to succeed. The common interests of Al-Saud family and Ibn Wahab were the basis of the Wahabi ideology. This ideology constituted the spiritual basis of the Saudi state.

The religious ambitions of Ibn Wahab combined with the political interests of Ibn Saud drove both to preach fanatically for Wahabism (Shaker 1972: 103)

Despite Wahabi teachings during that period, economic necessity and poverty obliged bedouin and rural women to work inside and outside their homes to contribute to family subsistence.

The Establishment of the Saudi State:

After King Abdel Aziz consolidated his power in Riyadh in 1912, the need for a military force became apparent to him to support his unification of the area. Although the townsmen in Riyadh supported him, they were not going to leave their fields and fight with him. Thus, what king Abdel Aziz needed was a fighting force that had the mobility of bedouin, and the loyalty and stability of townsmen. He achieved this goal by his policy of bedouin settlement *al hijar* (Habib 1970). King Abdel Aziz, with the support of *Ikhwan*, was able to persuade many tribes to settle on their own lands near wells.

Ikhwan is the plural form of the Arabic word *akh* which means brother. Habib (1970: 26) defines the *Ikhwan* - as "those bedouin who were taught the fundamentals of Orthodox Islam of the Hanbali school as preached by Abd-al-Wahab which their fathers and forefathers had forgotten or had perverted, and through the persuasion of the religious missionaries and with the material assistance of Ibn Sa'ud, abandoned their nomadic life to live in the *Hijra* which were built by him for them". According to *Ikhwan* teachings, the believers should leave their nomadic way of life, sell their flocks and migrate to a *hijra* settlement (single of *hijra*). Muhammed bin-Abd- al-Wahab defines the *Hijra* as "the move from the land of polytheism to the land of Islam" (Habib 1970: 27).

The first *hijra* was established in "Al Artaweya" in 1913; in the following years many *Hijars* were set up. These tribes were

convinced that Islam could not be practised properly in company with a nomadic lifestyle and thus, for the sake of Islam, many tribes became settled in rural communities.

Beside the *Ikhwan*, King Abdel Aziz used different strategies to win the support and loyalty of the bedouin. Since these communities were not accustomed to an agricultural livelihood, a system of subsidy was introduced to help people of these communities to live. The subsidies were usually given to the leaders who distributed them among their tribesmen. Links of intermarriage were established between Al-Saud families and other tribal leaders. Bedouin, who used to be fighters in the past, were encouraged to join the armed forces, and the leaders of the tribes were appointed as leaders in the national guard.

With the support of the *Ikhwan* programme, King Abdel Aziz extended his political power into the Eastern region in 1913. He expanded his control over the Western region in 1919. He secured his power over Asir in 1923. In 1932 Abdel Aziz was recognized as the King of the Saudi state. The main resources of the Arabian Peninsula during that period were derived from pilgrimage, herding and agriculture. But, generally speaking, the Saudi economy during that period was very poor and could hardly fulfil people's needs.

The unification of the kingdom led to the introduction of the veil in many rural parts of the kingdom. Villages were usually inhabited by a small number of kin groups, and all the people knew each other quite well. It was common and safe for women to move from place to place without being afraid of any disturbance from

men. After the unification of the area, government officials were appointed in the villages to run their affairs. The local people started to seclude and veil their women from these outsiders. Most women interviewed argue that the *ajanib* (outsiders) made them feel unsafe to move around unaccompanied by a man. One of the women interviewed from Al Ghat-Ghat, a village near Riyadh, who was leading a nomadic way of life forty years ago, expressed her dissatisfaction with the restrictions on women's movements nowadays as follows:

In the past, a girl could move with her herds for a hundred miles unaccompanied by a man. It was very safe and secure, we never heard of any attacks on women. A girl could spend five days in the desert without being afraid of any sexual attack. Nowadays, with the increasing number of *ajanib* (people who do not belong to the local area), it is unsafe for a woman to go next door by herself; we do not feel safe in our homes. We hear from time to time stories of burglaries and attacks in our homes.

The Household

The household in pre-oil Saudi society consisted of two or three families living under the same roof. A typical Saudi house in Riyadh consisted of one or more courtyards. The rooms faced inwards; the outside walls were massively built with stone foundations and mud bricks. Floors and roofs were made of palm sticks covered with mud. The house was divided into men's quarters and women's quarters. Houses in Riyadh were very close to each other, which enabled women to move easily from one house to

another. Houses in some villages were sited next to each other and had doors in between.

The extended family was common in pre-oil Saudi society. It consisted of husband, wife, their married sons and their families, and their unmarried daughters. The word "family" *a'ilah* in Najd was used in the narrow sense by which was meant all people who were living in the same household. It was also used in a much broader sense, meaning all people sharing common descent and constituting a patronymic group. Every household had a male head, who was usually the oldest male in the family. The household was a production unit, and all members of the family men, women and children contributed to the family economy. Property was owned communally, under the supervision of the eldest male in the household.

Households were structured according to seniority and sex. Elderly people occupied a higher status than younger ones. The youngsters were expected to show respect and obedience for older members of the family. They should not sit while older ones were standing, and they should not argue with them. There was a deep respect towards older people. Elderly women always had a superior position over younger ones. Men occupied a superior position to women in the daily routine. Men and women ate separately; men and elder boys ate first and women ate later. Men made all the decisions concerning family affairs. The same patterns of behaviour were observed by Ammar (1954) in Silwa village in Egypt. The distribution of food among family members was not determined according to the work contributed to its preparation but rather by

the social status of family members. Although women were working very hard in production and reproduction, their work was invisible; they were always conceived as being at home raising children. They were always placed in a secondary position to their husbands. The same point was mentioned by Maher (1981) for Morocco.

Women's Lives in Pre-Oil Saudi Society

As already mentioned, difficult economic conditions in the Arabian Peninsula before the discovery of oil made women's work a necessity for family subsistence. Veiling and female seclusion were not common in all parts of the Peninsula; for example the South and West such as Abaha, Ghammed and Asser were not accustomed to the veil. Women in these parts used to participate in public activities, in planting, harvesting, cutting grass, chopping firewood, carrying water and marketing (Al Aweil 1985). And they also participated in leisure activities, such as dancing and singing with male kin.

In Najd, peasants and bedouin women used to enjoy greater freedom of movement than urban women. Urban women were more restricted to their homes. The veil was almost exclusively an urban phenomenon. Urban men gave more emphasis to women's seclusion and use of the veil.

Urban women were limited in their ability to carry on barter in the town markets due to the urban practice of women remaining confined to their homes (Al Mana 1982). There were several factors

that determined the extent of women's seclusion in pre-oil Saudi society. One of the important of these was wealth. Since a woman was a symbol of family honour, wealthy families gave more emphasis to the seclusion of their women and the restriction of their movements. Poor families, on the other hand, were obliged to encourage their women to work outside their homes to contribute to family subsistence.

Kabeyli people were more strict in the seclusion of women than other groups. *Kabeyli* women used to help their male kin in cultivating or herding, but they were not allowed to work in paid employment even if they were in need of money. Some *Khadeiry* families allowed their women to work in their neighbours' fields, or in carrying fuel and water. Slaves families pushed their women to work in rich families' homes, or to work as market sellers. The husband's political position also affected the seclusion of women. When a husband obtained an important position in his community, his wife was more likely to be secluded. *Sheikhs'* wives were more secluded and more restricted in their movements than other *Kabeyli* women in the same tribe.

Women's seclusion varied from one community to another according to the different forms of economic production. Bedouin women enjoyed more freedom of movement than rural women, and rural women enjoyed more freedom than urban women. Urban women from wealthy families were extremely restricted to their homes. Some *Kabeyli* women from rich families who were living in urban areas stated that they did not leave their homes more than once a year or

a couple of years to visit their relatives in other villages.

The Sexual Division of Labour

Understanding the sexual division of labour in any society does not only mean describing the jobs that are considered appropriate for men and women but also the social relations that establish this categorization. Most societies have some kind of division of labour between sexes, which determines what kind of work is thought to be suitable for males and females to perform (Rosaldo 1974).

According to the sexual division of labour in pre-oil Saudi society, women were "ideally" identified with the household sphere while men were associated with the non-household sphere. However I found it difficult to apply the dichotomy between public and private, as it is identified in the literature, to pre-oil Saudi society. Rosaldo (1974: 23) defines the concept "domestic" or "private" as "those minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organized immediately around one or more mothers and their children". She uses the concept "public" to refer to "activities, institutions and forms of association that link, rank, organize, or subsume particular mother-child groups". This dichotomy did not exist in pre-oil Saudi society, or at best was only an idealized distinction in expected male/female role behaviour. In reality, it proves hard to draw a clear distinction between what was public and what was private. Were herding, cultivating, harvesting public or

private activities?

Most Saudi people believed that women were born to be mothers and housewives. Women should remain at home to raise their children, obey their husbands and perform their housework, while men should be the breadwinners of their families. Women's roles were never discussed publicly. Literature about women forty or fifty years ago was very rare. Because women were performing their expected roles, I could hardly find an article in any Saudi newspaper which discussed the sexual division of labour. The only articles that I found emphasized that women's primary role was to raise their children properly. Motherhood was considered the most important role for women to perform. In 1951, a Saudi writer explained women's role as follows:

It is time for a modern mother to realize that her role in life is not only to provide happiness to all her family members but that all the happiness could be achieved if she succeeds in raising her children properly, providing them with all the means that enable them to face life...etc. Women should concentrate all their efforts on the domestic circle, and the more sincerely a woman works hard to raise her children, the more the stability of the society is achieved (Ghazzawi 1951).

In fact, in bedouin and rural areas, women in Hejaz and Najd were obliged to work inside and outside their homes. In Hejaz, in the Western region, the Pilgrimage was the main source of income. Some families in Mecca and Jeddah worked as *muttawef* (pilgrimage guides). *Al-mutaweff* was a position inherited by family elders, whether male or female. There were some women working as *mutaweff*,

and they supervised the procedures of *Hijj* by themselves, or by employing some men to do it for them. These women had official sanction to do this job. Today, these jobs are restricted to men only.

In Najd, bedouin women wearing their (*burqu*) used to contribute to family subsistence by their participation in herding livestock, weaving tents and men gowns, *besht*, and making all their domestic equipment. Bedouin women were trained to make many of their domestic goods by hand: *Al-Sahah*, a carpet woven from animal's wool, *al-kasaf*, a mat made from palm fronds, *al-mubarrad*, a small tray made from palm fronds, *qurba*, a water-bag of goatskin, and embroidered bed sheets (Al Khateeb 1981). At the same time Najdi men never participated in domestic activities, because it was considered demeaning for a man to do a woman's housework. The sexual division of labour in Najd was divided into three categories:

A) male jobs such as fighting, protecting tribal territory and travelling to purchase goods in urban areas.

B) female jobs including all domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, chopping wood, carrying water, grinding seeds and raising children.

C) jobs shared by both men and women in the same household such as herding livestock, planting and harvesting. In the rural areas, only married women were allowed to work outside the house. Unmarried women were not allowed to leave their homes except on feast days to visit their relatives. In bedouin areas, both

married and unmarried women participated in herding. Women's paid work was not common in Najd; only women from poor families were allowed to work as paid labourers. One Saudi writer described the work of a poor woman in pre-oil Saudi society as follows:

Abu Ossman was a wood cutter, who used to go out in the morning and come back at night. Because what he earned was not enough to maintain his family, his wife used to work from time to time as paid sharecropper. In the planting season, she would participate with other men and women in preparing the land and sowing in one of their neighbours fields. She used to earn a quarter of Saudi riyal for her daily work. She would work in harvesting and in the locust season also. She went sometimes with some of her community to cut grass for livestock. When none of these jobs were available, she would help her husband in cutting and carrying fuel. She struggled everyday with her husband to provide family subsistence (Al Fawzan 1984).

Women's contribution to family subsistence varied according to family wealth and mode of production. Women from rich families used to have slaves and domestic servants to help them in their housework, while women from poor families were obliged to work hard outside their homes to maintain their families. An elderly woman from a poor family in Riyadh described her work in the past as follows:

I used to plant the seeds, harvest the crops, cut the grass, and feed the cattle. I cut the fuel and carried it home on my back. Only married women were participating in agriculture; girls did not go out of their homes. Women from wealthy families did not work in the fields. They usually employed some women, or had slaves, to bring them fuel and water and grind the wheat and corn for them.

It is noteworthy that before the discovery of oil, Saudi women from poor families used to work as domestic servants, and it

was not considered a disgrace or shameful for their families. But since the discovery of oil, and the rise of the standard of living, women from poor families prefer to work in government offices. Domestic jobs have now been filled mostly by foreign workers from the Far East and other Muslim countries. Nowadays, it is hard to find a Saudi woman who accepts work as a servant. Saudi women would rather earn less salary as a government employee than accept domestic work.

Even urban women in Najd, who were confined to their homes, used to contribute to the family economy. Urban women exchanged services in the same neighbourhood. Women would sell their work to other women in the same district. They would grind wheat, sew clothes and weave carpets for each other. Traders'wives in the urban areas would prepare goods for their husbands to sell in their shops. They prepared butter, *hennah* and *mushat* (certain plants used for hair) in their home, and gave them to their husbands to sell. A trader's wife described her work in the past as follows:

When I got married, I lived with my husband in Artaweyah, a small village near the bedouin communities. My husband was a trader, he was rich. He used to trade with the bedouin. They sold him meat and fat, and he sold them rice, sugar, coffee and *hail* (cardamom). We used to have guests every day. I used to wake up at dawn. I prepared the coffee for *abona* and his mother. (Most elderly women in Najd call their husbands *abona* which means "our father" as a sign of respect). Then he went to the mosque, and I went to the courtyard to milk the sheep. *Abona* usually had bedouin guests overnight. So I had to prepare breakfast for him and his guests. I used to work very hard in cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing and sewing. Because I did not have time to fetch water, or fuel, I used to employ one of my neighbours to do it for me. I used to prepare the butter, the *hennah*, the *mushat* at home, and gave it to my husband to sell it.

When bedouin women came to the shop, I used to help my husband in selling, and when he travelled, I used to sell on his behalf.

It is interesting to note that although women were working very hard or even harder than men, their work was not recognized or valued in the same way as men's work. When people talk about woman's work, they always say a woman "helped" or "shared" with her husband. Women's work was always regarded as secondary to men's work. A woman's work in pre-oil Saudi society was described in a recent newspaper article as follows:

A woman used to share with her husband in some of his activities such as harvesting...carrying water, grinding wheat, pounding barley, feeding livestock, milking and making butter, raising her children, cooking food, washing clothes and cleaning the house. So, woman usually had less leisure time than men did (Al Aweil 1985).

In discussing the sexual division of labour in pre-oil Saudi society, I found it very difficult to make a distinction between women's productive and reproductive activities. Which types of activities were to be considered part of production as opposed to reproduction? Since these two roles were closely interrelated, both of them were usually carried out at the same time, and sometimes in the same place (see p.41 for a general definition).

Women's Housework

In Najd, housework was assumed to be the responsibility of women alone. It was not appropriate for Saudi men to participate in any domestic work of any kind such as cooking, cleaning and washing. Since electricity was not generally introduced in Saudi Arabia until 1955, housework was very hard in the past. Everything had to be done manually. It took a large part of women's time and energy. It was far more difficult than housework today. People used to use *siraj* and *atrik* (oil lights) for lighting. There were no water taps in the home; women had to fetch water on their backs or employed women from poor families to bring it for them. There was no gas for cooking. Women used to chop wood and carry it on their backs for cooking. There were no modern domestic appliances; women had to wash the clothes of all extended family members by hand and used coal-powered irons. There were no mills for grinding seeds or wheat. Women had to grind using a hand grinding stone. Women had to sew all their family clothes by hand and, in addition to that, women were expected to make domestic items at home such as carpets, fans, mats, bags, and table cloths. If a women could not do these things by herself, she asked her neighbours to do them for her, and women in the same neighbourhood used to barter services.

Women's Daily Routine

Women's domestic work in Najd started before dawn. They woke up very early in the morning, they milked the livestock, baked bread and prepared the breakfast. Breakfast usually consisted of Saudi dishes such as *henini* (mashed dates with melted butter) and *arrickah* (a sweet pastry made from flour, melted butter and sugar). All these dishes took some time to prepare.

Men woke up later, took their breakfast and set off to their work or to meet other men. Women ate later and continued their domestic work. They ground the wheat, pounded the barley, washed the clothes and prepared lunch. Lunch was the main meal of the day and for some families, it was the only meal they had. After lunch, women continued their housework. They ironed and sewed clothes, ground wheat, wove carpets, made mats and prepared dinner if they could afford it. An old lady from Majmah described her daily routine in the past as follows:

I woke up before dawn. As I had one cow and seven goats, I milked them before sunrise and let them free. I put the milk in a samiel container made of goatskin and shook it very well to churn the butter out. It took me half an hour to do, until I felt my hands were numb. I baked the bread in our traditional oven *Al-tannor* and then I made *arriekah* or *gorsan* (unleavened bread) for breakfast. Then I would wake my husband. My husband and his brothers usually ate first and went to their work and we ate later on. Then I continued my housework: I cleaned everything, I tidied up the room, I swept the floor, and I washed our clothes. I remember sitting washing for hours until I felt my back was almost broken. After cleaning and washing, I started cooking lunch. It was usually one main Saudi dish such as *kabsah* rice with meat, *ṣargoug* (bread dipped in vegetables) *ṣatazaz* bread dipped in vegetable, *jareish* corn with yogourt or corn with meat and tomato.

After lunch, I ground the wheat; I used to grind a big bag every two or three days. I pounded barley, I ironed the clothes, I sewed my family's clothes and sometimes I sewed for my neighbours. I used to make three dresses for one Saudi riyal. The riyal at that time was valuable; you could buy a lamb for two riyals. A servant's salary was three riyals monthly. But the riyal did not come easy. I had to work very hard to get it. I used to weave carpets for my neighbours. I worked all day long to finish the work. Sometimes we wished the day could become longer to finish all the work. I remember one time I became anaemic from hard work, frequent pregnancies and shortage of food.

As I have mentioned before, because of King Abdel Aziz's policy of bedouin settlement, many bedouin families left their nomadic way of life, sold their camels and settled in agricultural communities. But since bedouin men were not accustomed to agricultural activities, and they regarded cultivating tasks as demeaning for them to perform, most *kabeyli* men were reluctant to work in their fields. They used to employ workers from poor families or slaves to work for them. An elderly women from Hautat Beni Tamiem described her life in the past as follows:

I got married when I was seventeen. I lived with my husband, and my brothers-in-law their wives and children. We (women) used to work together. Women in the past worked twenty times as much as women today. I have given birth to fourteen babies, five boys and nine girls; only six survived. Women in the past were more patient than women today. I used to cut fuel wood with my hands, I milked seven cows with my hands, and I sewed my clothes with my hands. I used to wake up at dawn. I milked the cows, churned the butter from the milk, and I prepared the breakfast. I had to cook two big casseroles everyday for my husband, his relatives and his slaves. I worked very hard in preparing the *arriekah* until the sweat poured out of each and every part of my body. I prepared Arabic coffee and sent it to the men. Men always had their meal first; women ate later. After breakfast, we cleaned the house and washed the clothes. We never went out, but some women did. They used to bring us bundles of wheat, fuel and water on their backs. Everything in the

past needed time and effort to be prepared: washing, ironing, grinding, baking and storing. Everything had to be done manually. We had to grind a large amount of wheat every two days. We had to pound barley every two or three days. Then we started cooking lunch. We usually cooked one dish everyday *kabsah* or *jareish* or *margoug*. The best food was offered to men. The nice meat was offered to men, and the fresh milk was also offered to men. After lunch we took a little rest for about an hour to drink our afternoon tea and then we continued our housework. We used to churn milk three or four times a day. We put the milk in pots which were kept in the men's visiting rooms *al-madif*. We used to work until we fell asleep from fatigue.

When I asked the same lady about men's work in the past, she said:

They had no work; they managed their farms. They had male slaves to cultivate the land and they just supervised the work. If they had a broken machine, they tried to fix it.

Most elderly women interviewed argued that life was harsh and severe in the past. The scarcity of resources obliged Saudi women to work hard for their families. Even women from wealthy families, who usually had slaves or domestic servants, were obliged to work in their homes as well. A Sheikh's wife from Huraymela described her life and her domestic work in the past as follows:

I married when I was sixteen; I lived with my husband, my brothers-in-law and their families in a big house. I did not do a lot of housework. We had five slaves and two domestic servants to bring the water and fuel and buy our needs. *Abona* was very strict. He did not allow any women to leave the house, not even the slaves. Since *abona* always had guests, he had a big separate room in the courtyard for entertaining them. He had a cook also to prepare the food for men. We (she and other women in the household) usually spent the mornings in cooking our own food. In the afternoons, we usually had some female guests, or we watched the slaves while they were singing and dancing. I never visited my relatives or friends; people always came to visit me. When *abona* had important guests, I used to prepare

different dishes at home and send it to his *al madife* (guest room). I remember on those occasions I used to cook from eight o'clock at night until the next morning.

I think it is important to mention here that women from rich families in pre-oil Saudi society were not like the "ladies" in the Victorian period in England. A lady in Victorian times was not expected to participate in any sort of domestic work. She must not touch the dirt or participate directly in bringing up their children; her role was only the supervision of the domestic help and provision of sex and comfort to her husband when he demanded it (Hall 1980). A woman from a rich family in pre-oil Saudi society was expected to work hard with her hands with the slaves or domestic servants. Having slaves or domestic help did not mean that women did not need to do the housework. However, there is no doubt that their work was much less than women's work in poor families. Women from poor families worked continually from dawn until late at night. They hardly had time for leisure activities. The only occasions for fun were weddings, feasts, or celebrations for a new baby.

Marriage

Early marriage was common, thirteen or fourteen was the average age of marriage for Saudi women, sixteen and seventeen for Saudi men. The difference between spouses' age was never considered. The marriage of elderly men to young women was

widespread. Men were always ranked according to their descent and wealth. Beside her descent, a woman was usually ranked according to her beauty and cleverness in housework. Decisions about marriage were usually taken by elderly males in the family.

Girls were never asked their consent in marriage. Not even mothers were asked for their consent to their daughters marriage. Mothers usually knew about plans for their daughters' marriage from their sons. Some elderly women emphasized that they did not know about their own marriages until the wedding day itself.

Endogamous marriage was dominant in pre-oil Saudi society. By "endogamy" I mean marriage within the same patronymic group. The majority of Najdi people were of *kabeyli* status, for these people endogamy, fathers'brothers'daughter's marriage in particular, was preferred for several reasons.

1) It guaranteed the unity of the family. One of the common phenomena in pre-oil Saudi society was *al-hajr*, which means that a girl could be promised to one of her fathers'brothers'sons from childhood. She usually remained in her father's house until she reached the right age for marriage. But no other suitors would be considered or accepted during that period.

2) Saudi people in general and Najdis in particular were of tribal origin. Najdis felt that they were of "pure" tribal descent and to protect their purity they refused to give their daughters to anyone not of the same tribal origin or whose lineage was not as good as their own lineage was.

3) Property was owned communally under the supervision of the

eldest male in the family. FBD marriage would keep the property together and keep the unity of the family in the same household.

4) Because women made a productive contribution to family subsistence, parents usually felt that they had rights over their daughters' work. Saudi people used to say, "We have more rights to our daughters' work than outsiders".

5) It was believed that FBD was more patient and submissive than outsider brides. Even if the groom was bad, his bride would not complain or taint his reputation because he was her cousin.

It is interesting to mention that some Saudi women commented that it was not actually a matter of patience but a helplessness that made FBD more tolerant of her groom's mistreatment. A woman had no other option than to be patient. If she complained about her groom's misbehaviour, nobody would listen to her. And even if they listened, nobody would support her against him. So most probably, she would surrender to her destiny. But the situation was not the same for the outsider bride. If she was mistreated, she would return to her parents. The bride's father usually considered any dishonour to his daughter to be a dishonour to him. He usually asked the groom either to treat her well or to send her back to her family.

Marital relationships

According to Islamic teachings a man is responsible for providing maintenance for his family *nafaqa*. Verse 34 of surah Al

Nisaa (the women) indicates that a man is responsible for protecting and maintaining his wife and children. Many Saudi men believed that the economic role of a husband as the breadwinner of the family placed him in a superior position over women. Thus, the relationship between husband and wife in the "traditional" Saudi family was a dominant/subordinate one. Although women in pre-oil society were contributing to family subsistence, they occupied a secondary position to men. Pre-oil society was not an egalitarian society; men were always in a superior position over women. Although, women were working very hard, even harder than men, they enjoyed few of the results of their labours input of their cash resources. Women used to work for their fathers or husbands. Thus, I would argue that it is not woman's work that determines a woman's status in the family but her control over her labour revenue.

Saudi women were brought up to believe that a good wife should be obedient to her husband. The most important quality that a woman was admired for was obedience. Elderly Saudi women indicated that many divorces took place because the wife was not obedient. A wife was expected to devote herself to her husband's comfort. Being obedient meant to do all she was told, not to argue, and not to express her opinion. The relationship between husband and wife was expected to be formal in public. No affection or intimacy was permissible in front of other people. An old lady described a woman's respect for her husband in the past as follows:

We used to respect our men. We never ate with them, and

if a man passed by while we were eating or drinking, we stopped eating or drinking. When men talked we used to look down. We obeyed our husbands in everything. We did all that they ordered. I have never raised my voice in front of my husband. He did not hear anything from me except *sam*, *labeik* and *hader* (Arabic words to show obedience and great respect). I have never said "no" to my husband. I used to put on his socks and shoes and I carried his coat *meshlah* to the front door.

Polygamy

Because of the poverty of Saudi society before the discovery of oil, not all Saudi men could afford to have many wives. Successive marriage, however, was common among Saudi men. They used to marry and divorce several times. For example, fifty-seven out of the hundred fathers and fathers-in-law of women interviewed practised serial monogamy; twenty-seven only out of the one hundred had married polygamously. Some of these men married up to twenty times. It is noteworthy that divorce was not considered an ordeal to bedouin women, as it was for urban women. Some elderly women, who were living in urban areas, emphasized that divorce was used to threaten them. They accepted the fact that they had no choice but to continue to live with their husbands, although they were not happy with their lives.

Before the discovery of oil, polygamy was mainly practised by sheikhs and wealthy men. Unfortunately, there are no statistics about the rate of polygamy in the past or even now. Different factors can be used to explain the prevalence of serial marriages in pre-oil Saudi society:

1) The scarcity of resources before the discovery of oil prevented Saudi men from having more than one wife at any one time.

2) The average bride price *al mahr* was low in general, which enabled Saudi men to have several marriages. The *mahr* of a bedouin woman fifty years ago was one camel, silver bracelets and some cloth for the bride. The average *mahr* of an urban bride was one hundred Saudi riyals. However, not all brides had the same amount of *mahr*, which varied according to family status. A sheikh's daughter's *mahr* was always higher than that of an average girl in the tribe (Al Khateeb 1981: 83).

3) Father's brother's daughter's marriage was common in pre-oil Saudi society, and it was difficult for a man to have two cousins in the same household (Al Khateeb 1981).

It is important to mention that during a short period after the discovery of oil and the increase of oil revenue, polygamy became more common in Saudi society, particularly in urban areas. It would have been surprising to find a man who had only one wife twenty or thirty years ago. Polygamy was considered a source of pride for Saudi men. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, this increase in the rate of polygamy was short lived and polygamy has now declined substantially, particularly among the younger generations.

Since Saudi women did not have any alternative, they were obliged to accept living with co-wives. A sheikh's wife from Huraymela described her experience of having co-wives as follows:

my husband married once before our marriage, and he

married thirteen times later on. He married his third wife fifteen years after our marriage. I was pregnant at that time with our last son. When I knew about his marriage, I was very sad and depressed. Their marriage existed for three months only and they got divorced. He used to give me a present *redwah* as a compensation when he got married. Later on, I did not mind when he got married again; I got used to it. Even when the slaves came happily to tell me that he had divorced his new bride I did not feel happy because I knew that he was going to marry again. I don't know why men like to marry repeatedly; maybe they get bored very quickly.

Motherhood

As a new bride, a woman occupied the lowest status in her family-in-law. She was expected to show great respect towards men and elderly women in the family. Saudi women realised that their only way of gaining power in their families-in-law was by having children. Motherhood was greatly valued in Saudi society. Saudi women felt more pride when they gave birth to a baby boy. It meant more credit and more power to her position in the family.

Most elderly women interviewed emphasized that besides their heavy productive work, they were expected to produce as many children as possible. Women usually spent all their child bearing years either pregnant or breast feeding. Women often gave birth to ten or fifteen children, few of whom would survive. Because of the poverty of the area at that time and the shortage of medical services, infant mortality was very high. It was hard to find a Saudi woman who had not had miscarriages or lost one or more children. Unfortunately, there are no data about infant mortality forty years ago, but most women interviewed stressed that infant

mortality was very high. One of the women interviewed gave birth to thirteen children, only five of whom survived. Another one had two miscarriages and gave birth to ten children, only six of whom survived.

In all, my fifty respondents have 516 siblings and half-siblings which means that the average family consisted of ten children. But one should not forget that some of these families had co-wives in the same household, which means that these ten children were from more than one wife. This figure does not include the miscarriages or deceased children.

Saudi women were expected to take the responsibility for raising children, while men always tried to keep a distance between themselves and their children. The father's contact with his children was very weak. Saudi men were brought up to believe that love and affection were feminine characteristics. So they always tried to be strict and firm with their children.

Physical punishment was common in Saudi families. It was used for boys more often than girls (Al Suwaigh 1984: 202, 205). Women, on the other hand, were very close to their children. They considered children a source of support and a guarantee for the future.

Boys and girls were brought up differently. A little girl from the age of five or six was trained to do the housework. She spent most of her time doing household tasks. Girls were not allowed to participate in any work outside their homes. Their movements were absolutely restricted to their homes. An exception

to this rule was the case of bedouin girls who used to participate in herding activities. They would go away for several days and nobody would dare to disturb them.

The relationship between a mother and her daughter was very strong. Oppression created a feeling of solidarity between mother and daughter. But a mother did not expect her daughter to support her in the future. As a woman, she was going to face the same future. All that mothers could do was to teach their daughters from their own experience. Daughters usually sat with their mothers when receiving a morning visit from a neighbour. While the women talked, the small girls listened carefully and learned how to deal with their husbands and their families-in-law.

The mother/ son relationship was a special one. As a patrilineal society, Saudi culture gave a great emphasis to producing male children who would carry the family name. Women used to treat their sons with more love and respect.

Sons played an important role in communication between the men's world and the women's world. They usually informed their mothers about all their fathers' planning and decisions. Since a woman knew that her son would be the head of the family one day, she expected him to give her support in the future. She usually talked to him as a man, and she revealed to him the oppression she suffered and the sacrifices she offered for her children's sake. The son always had feelings of sympathy towards his mother and tried to compensate her in the future by giving her the power to dominate his family affairs. From an early age, a boy was pushed

into the public sphere. He was encouraged to accompany his father to the market, to the mosque and to the men's meetings. He was allowed to play in the street with his friends. He was encouraged to be brave and independent. He was trained to perform his future role as the head of the family.

Mother/Daughter-in-Law Relationship:

As I have mentioned before, the household was structured according to seniority and sex. Although Saudi society was a male dominated society, where men had the authority to make the decisions, it would be misleading to think that Saudi women were entirely weak and passive. Women had considerable power in the domestic sphere and they were also able to obtain some power from their position as mothers. Women as mothers exercised a good deal of influence over their sons and daughters-in-law. Women used to play a significant role in the families of their sons; they usually managed the household affairs, and they influenced their sons' decisions. A daughter-in-law was expected to show respect and obedience to her mother-in-law.

The relationship between mother and daughter-in-law was an authoritarian relationship. As long as a wife was living with her mother-in-law, she was expected to follow her mother-in-law's

orders and instructions. The mother-in-law usually managed the household and held everything under her control. An old lady from Riyadh described her relationship with her mother-in-law as follows:

When I got married, I lived with my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law was very hard. She managed the household affairs and everything was in her hands. My husband used to hand over all his salary to his mother and when he needed money he used to ask her to please lend him some money. She controlled everything at home. Even if I needed anything, I had to go and ask her for it. I had nothing at home. I was working all day long like a servant. No, Wallahi, servants nowadays are better off. They can do what they like, but I could not do anything without her consent. I could not even go to bed before she went to bed.

The value system in Saudi society helped to perpetuate this authoritarian relationship. Girls were taught from their early days that the mother-in-law was one of the most important figures at home. She should do her best to win her mother-in-law's satisfaction. New brides were expected to show respect and submission to their mothers-in-law. An old lady told me how they were brought up to obey their mother-in-laws:

Our mothers used to tell us to obey our mothers-in-laws. They warned us about being disobedient. They kept on saying: "Your mother-in-law's ghadab (anger) could lead you to hell; you have to submit to her word. If your mother-in-law tells you not to go, don't go even to your mother". And we used to believe what we were told.

Mothers encouraged their daughters to be obedient to their mothers-in-law because they expected their daughters-in-law to be obedient to them. Every daughter-in-law expected to be a

mother-in-law in the future, and thus tended to perpetuate the situation.

One of the interesting points to mention about my interviews with elderly women is that almost all women talked about their lives in the past with glory and happiness. Despite their tough life, and the prevalence of polygamy at that time (Nine out of ten of my cases had had co-wives), they felt their lives were very productive and useful. They claimed that women, nowadays, are not happy. Although they have everything, they suffer from boredom and loneliness. This raises an important point for anthropological method, which is the extent to which the evaluation of lives and cultures of others are inevitably influenced by the perspective of the observer. The most important thing is how people see their own lives, although the construction of the past is itself contradictory and influenced by the dominant representations in any society, I gave particular emphasis in my interviews to women's own perception of their experience.

However, it is difficult to make a general judgement about women's lives and status in pre-oil Saudi society. Because of the poverty of the Arabian Peninsula before the discovery of oil, not all Saudi families could afford to seclude their daughters. Rural and bedouin women contributed to family subsistence by participating in agricultural activities and herding livestock.

To pull out some similarities and differences between Saudi women's lives before and after the discovery of oil, I will illustrate the main points this chapter has discussed: Women were

not a homogeneous category; their contribution to family subsistence and their seclusion varied from family to family according to their status, family honour, lineage affiliation and residential setting. Although bedouin and rural women made greater economic contributions to their families, they had no greater control over the product. The way of life in bedouin and rural areas gave women greater mobility than women in the urban areas in Najd. But, at the same time, they bore a greater burden of physical labour.

However, domestic work was always considered women's responsibility. In poor or rich families and in no matter what type of economy, housework was always considered a woman's work. Although the sexual division of labour in Saudi society assigned women to the household sector and men to the non-household sector, women did participate in public activities in agriculture and animal husbandry. However, this labour was not recognized as "work" because it was considered part of their domestic duties.

Although Saudi society was a male-dominated society, where men controlled all decision-making, women as mothers had power over their children, and as they became older, their power increased, not only over their own children, but over their daughters-in-law and their siblings as well. The value system in Saudi society helped in perpetuating the authority of the husband and of the mother-in-law over other women. Although women were leading a very harsh life, their perception of their lives was highly positive. Was this justification of their past, or were they really happy? It is

difficult to say!

Looking at pre-oil Saudi society as a context and background to the way in which oil revenues have been directed, one would ask in what way do these political events (the Wahabi movement and the unification of the Arabian Peninsula under the Al-Saud family) affect the response to the influx of wealth in Saudi society? Does economic "development" give women more mobility and freedom to participate in the labour force? In what way have women's lives been affected by the discovery of oil? How do Saudi women conceive of their roles in contemporary society? All these questions will be considered in the following chapters.

Table IV.1

Saudi Government Revenue in Pounds 1902-47

	Approximate annual government revenue
1902-12	£50,000
1913-25	£100,000
1926-37	£4-5 million
1938-46	£5-6 million
1947-8	£21.5 million

Source: Tim Niblock 1982: 94

Chapter V

Saudi Society Today

The discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia must be considered as a turning point in Saudi history. As I have mentioned before, social changes in Saudi society did not happen suddenly. We can distinguish two separate stages of oil production, and associated socio-economic change, in recent Saudi history. During the first stage, 1948-1973, the production of oil was increasing steadily, and world demand for oil was relatively easily supplied. The increase in Saudi oil production was gradual, standing at 0.55 million barrels per day in 1950, and reaching 3.88 million barrels in 1970. Table (V.1) shows that oil production was increasing at an average rate of 9.2 per cent per year. Oil revenue was also limited during that period. The price per barrel was \$1.75 in 1950, and attained 1.80 in 1970, while oil revenue increased from \$ 57 million in 1950 to \$1,214 million in 1970. During this period, there were some improvements in the Saudi standard of living such as the opening of schools and hospitals and road construction, but there was no radical transformation in social structure (Niblock 1982: 95-97).

The second stage in the study of the Saudi oil economy ran

from 1973 to 1985, the sudden increase of oil production took place after 1973. Table (V.1) shows that while oil production was 1,173.9 million barrels in 1969, it continued to increase until it reached 3.579.5 million barrels in 1981. Oil prices had also dramatically increased during this period, from \$ 5.04 per barrel in 1973 to \$13.00 per barrel in 1976 (see Table V.2). Two related reasons can be cited for the sudden increase in oil prices. First, the Saudi government succeeded in raising its share in the ownership of the oil sector. Second, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) took the important decision to increase not only the price of oil but to change the system of determining prices. Until 1973, the price of crude oil was determined by the international oil companies. Since 1973, the prices have been fixed by the producing companies.

With the massive inflow of wealth, Saudi society has witnessed fundamental socio-economic changes during the last twenty years. The Saudi economy has been transformed from a subsistence economy based on herding and agriculture to a cash economy based on the oil industry. The influx of wealth enabled the Al-Saud family to establish the modern Saudi state and strengthen its domination over the entire kingdom. Many people in the Arabian Peninsula have left their nomadic way of life and sought a stable paid job in government service. Some elite families have established private construction and trading businesses. The Saudi economic system is a mixture of public planning and private business. The government

set up "development" programmes within the framework of market freedom. Saudi business men, whether in industry or trade, are completely exempt from taxes. However they pay the Zakat (a religious levy amounting 2.5 per cent of liquid assets) (Looney 1982: 38). Today, some Saudi merchants are among the richest businessmen in the world. Land prices have increased dramatically and have made large landowning families among the richest in the Kingdom. The influx of wealth in Saudi society has created many contradictions. There are great differences between people in terms of income, education, "modernity" and adherence to Islamic teachings. Riyadh as the capital of Saudi Arabia has greatly expanded in size. Many roads have been paved, many new houses have been built, and many construction projects have been carried out.

The lives of Saudi families have been greatly affected by these changes. The extended family, which was dominant in pre-oil society, is declining, particularly in urban areas like Riyadh, Jeddah and Dahrhan. By extended family I mean the patrilineal, patrilocal residence group of husband, his wife, their unmarried daughters, their married sons and their wives, the husband's brothers, their wives and their children. The proportion of nuclear family households is increasing significantly (AlManaa 1981). The nuclear family does not constitute an economic unit of production. But nevertheless, the patronymic group still plays an important role in determining the individual's status in the society and his or her position in the labour market. It is true that education has meant that most jobs are achieved and not

inherited, but access to jobs is still usually affected by family affiliations and the individual's social contacts in government offices

There is another kind of change which has taken place in Saudi society. As mentioned before, in pre-oil society property was owned communally under the supervision of the eldest male in the household. Nowadays, with the emigration of young couples to urban areas and the individualisation of employment, many large land holdings are owned individually. with the exception of a few lands which are still kept by some "big" families to perpetuate the family name.

Modern houses tend to be bigger in size with more rooms. Most Saudi families in Riyadh tend to live in houses instead of flats because houses give them more privacy. Furniture has become more Westernized, and more household appliances have been acquired. Most houses in Riyadh have television, radio, refrigerator, video, air-conditioner, oven, washing machine, and a car. These things, which were considered luxuries thirty years ago, are considered today to be part of the necessities of life. Saudi society has become one of the most consumption oriented societies in the world. Almost all commodities are imported from abroad. All family members are encouraged to be consumers-men, women and children.

The status of Saudi Arabia as the guardian of the holy cities Mecca and Medina and its economic importance as one of the richest countries in the world, has put more pressure on the Saudi government to follow Islamic teachings. Islam pervades social life

in Saudi Arabia. Saudi legal doctrine derives from three basic sources:

- 1) The Koran, the holy book of God's words as revealed to the prophet Muhammed.

- 2) The *sunnah*, which includes all Muhammed's sayings *haddiths* and deeds.

- 3) *Ijtihad*, which refers to the interpretation of the Koran and the *sunnah* by the four Muslim schools: Shafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Hanifi.

Since Wahabism depends mainly on the teachings of Ibn Hanbal, a royal decree was announced in 1928 proclaiming that the Hanbali school would be the primary source of Saudi legislation (Al Zuhaili 1980). The Hanbali school is known as one of the more conservative schools in Islam. However, Saudi legislation is adapted and modified according to the demands of the modern Saudi state, on condition that it does not conflict with the main principles of Islam. For example, although slavery was not directly prohibited in Islam, King Faisal abolished it in 1963, because according to the principles of Islam, there is no distinction between a Muslim and another except in their fearing of God *altaqwa*; Islam, in principle, is a religion of equality. And from this point of view, King Faisal's abolition of slavery was in keeping with the spirit of the religion.

Since, Sharia law could not cover all aspects of the modern state a second type of law or "Royal Decree" has been developed. These decrees are usually prepared by specialized advisors of the

king and relate to different issues such as: industry, employment, and transportation. These two types of law are seen as separate. The application of Sharia is controlled by the religious authority, and the "Royal Decree" is controlled by the king (Knauerchase 1975: 32:35). In 1929, a "Committee for the Encouragement of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" *Jameyat al amr bi-al ma'ruf wal nahy an al munkar* was established. According to Wahabi teachings, this authority is responsible for eradicating heresy and non-Islamic practices from the society. Two levels of religious official can be distinguished in this institution. The *ulema* are responsible for protecting the purity of Islam through their decisions *fatwa* relating to different aspects of social life in Saudi society such as sex segregation, female employment, and family affairs. The second group are the *mutawa* who are responsible for religious and moral practices in public places. They call men to pray at prayer times and enforce the veiling of women in public places. These religious institutions play a powerful role in Saudi social life.

The move towards modernization has not necessarily implied that Wahabi teachings are being swept aside by these changes in the Saudi society. On the contrary, Wahabi teachings are still dominant in public life. Shaker (1972) argues that "modernization" in Saudi Arabia is a combination of "traditionalism" and "modernity". Shaker indicates that most studies stress that there is a conflict between traditionalism and modernity, but she emphasizes that in the case of Saudi society these two aspects support each other.

While new modern institutions were created over the traditional social structure of Saudi Arabia, no attempts were made to directly alter the values basic to the traditional structure (Shaker 1972: 357)

However, I think while Saudis try hard to keep the balance between modernity and traditionalism, they sometimes find themselves in contradictory positions. They feel conflict between what they are saying and what they are doing. For example; although most Saudis believe that praying is a duty of every Muslim, whether male or female, not all people do pray. Although Islam emphasizes that all people are equal and that there is no distinction between one person and another except in *altaqwa* (God fearing), in reality most *kabeily* men give more emphasis to ethnicity than to adherence to the Islamic teachings in choosing their daughters' grooms. Furthermore, Saudi men prefer that their women be driven by non *mahram* men, rather than allowing them to drive their own cars. Those *mahram* are defined in the Koran as "fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, and their sisters' sons." (Surat Al Nur, 31).

Women and the Increase of Wealth

Saudi women as members of the society, have benefited from some of these economic changes. In 1956, the first private school

for girls was opened in Jeddah by Princess Iffat, King Faisal's wife, and girls' schools have subsequently increased in number, particularly in urban areas. (The educational system will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.) With the increasing spread of female education and because of the rules of sex segregation, Saudi women have been encouraged to work in female jobs such as teaching, health services and social work to take over the positions formerly filled by foreign female workers. Women's associations have also been established in different parts of the kingdom. The activities of these associations are restricted to charitable services, and their social activities are intended to strengthen women's "natural" female roles as mothers and housewives. Likewise, foreign domestic help has become increasingly affordable. It is worth noting that it is hard to find Saudi women working in such a job (see p.105). Also women's domestic work has become easier than before.

But, by the same token, most women's participation in public life has become more restricted, and their economic contribution to the family has been reduced. The increase of wealth has enabled many Saudi families to depend on the husband as the main, or only, source of income. For many families, women's economic contribution is now considered less essential than it was before. One of the old women interviewed, who had led a nomadic way of life before settling in Riyadh twenty years ago, described her resentment at her life today as follows:

In the past we used to work very hard from sunrise to

sunset. Now we have nothing to do except eating and praying and sleeping.

The influx of wealth and the unification of the area under the Al-Saud family has helped to spread Wahabi teachings all over the kingdom and has created a greater uniformity of lifestyle among Saudi people. For example, the *thoub* which was the traditional dress of men in Najd has become the national dress of Saudi men in different parts of the kingdom. The black veil *abayah*, which was the traditional dress of urban women in Najd has become a general phenomenon in all parts of the kingdom. In both rural and urban areas, and at all levels of society, women are expected to use the veil from the onset of puberty and sometimes earlier.

The shape of the veil varies from one region to another. Thus one can tell the regional origin of a woman by looking at the way she wears the veil. In addition, the material of the veil is a further indicator of a woman's family status. Women from well-to-do families tend to use a silk *abayah*, while women from poor families tend to use jersey or other thick fabric.

The great majority of women in Riyadh cover their faces in public places. Different factors have supported the existence and spread of the veil in Saudi society. Some of these factors can be attributed to changes in the structure of the society while others derive from women's attitudes themselves. I deal first with the social and political factors that encourage the spread of the veil in Saudi society:

- (1) The inter-relationship between the Al-Saud family and the

Wahabi movement has managed to spread Wahabism throughout the kingdom and today if a Saudi woman were to appear in public without a veil, she would risk verbal or physical chastisement by members of the "Committee of Encouragement of Virtue and Prevention of Vice".

(2) The influx of wealth in Saudi society has encouraged Saudi men to employ foreign workers and to veil their wives.

(3) The recent international revival of fundamentalism has encouraged many men in Muslim countries to veil their women. Some Saudi men are affected by this movement.

(4) A woman's body in most Muslim countries has always been considered the symbol of the nation (Rezig 1983; Yagenah and Keddie 1986; Ahmed 1982). The economic and religious importance of Saudi Arabia has put more emphasis on the veiling of Saudi women as a symbol of Muslim womanhood.

(5) Since the veil has always been associated with urbanism King Abdel Aziz's settlement of bedouin has encouraged the majority of Saudi women to be veiled.

On the other hand, it would be simplistic to assume that veiling is merely imposed on women as an aspect of male domination as some outsiders have argued. Women, too, support and strengthen the practice. Why should this be so? We can identify several factors which help account for the importance of veiling in the construction of women's self-identity:

(1) Many Saudi women, in Riyadh, observe the veil willingly. It is something they have been socialized into from their early

childhood. Girls are brought up to believe that because women are precious and valuable like diamonds, they need to be veiled and secluded. Thus, they grow up having a positive attitude towards the veil. For them, the veil is an indicator that a girl has become a woman.

(2) Women are brought up to believe that wearing the veil is the only appropriate way for a modest woman to gain honour and respect.

(3) The veil has also become a sign of femininity. Some Saudi women feel that the veil is a source of attraction. Veiled women are said to be more attractive to men than non-veiled ones. In contrast to Western societies where the more clothes a woman takes off, the more attractive she becomes, in Saudi society, the more a woman is veiled the more attractive she becomes to men. When foreign women walk around in the streets of Riyadh, wearing their ordinary dresses, few men look at them or disturb them. But men usually gaze at veiled women trying to catch a glimpse beneath the veil. The veiling of women creates a feeling of curiosity in Saudi men - a matter of "forbidden fruits". Many men consider the veil as a symbol of truly feminine behaviour; for them, unveiled women lose their femininity. I remember a Saudi man in Riyadh, talking to his friend about Jeddah, who expressed surprise that although women were walking around unveiled, on the seaside *al korneish*, men did not gaze at them.

(4) Because the seclusion of women is an indicator of their men's economic position, the veil has become a sign of high status for Saudi women.

(5) Observing the veil, to some extent, has not prevented women from enjoying their rights in education and employment.

It is worth emphasizing that women in Riyadh are more conservative in wearing the veil than in Jeddah. AlTorki (1986) has mentioned that, although people in Jeddah acknowledge that removing the veil is a sinful thing, women in the middle and younger generations are not very strict in covering their faces in public places except in the traditional market. But in Riyadh, the situation is not the same, the great majority of women cover their faces in public. However, in the last few years a few elite women from Riyadh, who have studied abroad, tend not to cover their faces in public, in some cases despite the opposition of their natal families. But they usually have the support of their husbands, because they believe that covering the face is a matter of tradition and does not emerge from Islam itself.

As we saw in Chapter Two, Mernissi (1975) has argued that Muslim society is characterized by a contradiction between what can be called "an explicit theory" and "an implicit theory" of female sexuality. The explicit theory predominates people's beliefs. It assumes that men are aggressive and active, while women are passive. The implicit theory dominates the Muslim unconsciousness. It assumes that women are destructive. Women must be controlled to protect men from being distracted from their social and religious obligations. According to this theory, social order can be maintained if segregation between sexes and veiling are observed. Most articles in Saudi newspapers written by men emphasize that

women are weak and emotional and that they need to be veiled and secluded. A Saudi writer portrays the image of a woman as follows:

A woman is weak by nature; she does not use her mind throughout her life. She is usually dominated by her desire, feelings and emotions....This is contrary to the man who usually uses his mind and wisdom in everything. We cannot mention wisdom without associating this with a man (Al Jasser 1984).

At the same time a woman may be said to be an evil thing. A woman's sexual attractiveness *fetnah* threatens the morality of society. A woman's beauty is irresistible. It is claimed that if women are controlled and kept secure, the whole society will be more secure.

The mass media in Saudi society stress that social order can be maintained as long as women observe the veil properly. Women's *fetnah* is the main source of disorder and chaos in society. A member of the religious legislative authority in Saudi Arabia explains the importance of the veil and sex segregation in Islam as follows:

Islam has urged Muslim men to protect women and keep them safe. Protecting women means protecting the whole society from the chaos and disorder which other societies are suffering from and which they cannot find their way out of. It is known that women's involvement in men's work leads to the mingling of the sexes and contact with men in private. For a woman to be alone with a man is extremely dangerous and has terrible effects on society. That is why Islam asks women to remain in their homes and perform their natural tasks apart from men (Ben Baz 1985).

A woman in Saudi society is regarded as the symbol of her family's honour. The honour of any family depends on the chastity

and purity of its female members. Having a sexual affair outside the institution of marriage stains a woman's reputation and brings dishonour and disgrace upon her family. It could expose her to being killed. In keeping with this point of view that women should not have any sexual relations outside the institution of marriage, Saudi society puts great emphasis on a girl's virginity at marriage. A girl is expected to be a virgin until she gets married. Saudi people distinguish between married and unmarried women by using the term *bent* (girl) for an unmarried woman. The term *bent* is used to refer to a virgin, while a married woman is called *maraa*. An unmarried woman is considered a *bent* as long as she is not married, no matter what her age.

Socialization

Socialization in Saudi society prepares boys and girls for different roles in the future. Saudi society is a patrilineally organised society, and having male children is regarded as an asset to a man's descent group because they enlarge and strengthen the father's line. Male and female children are received differently. Having a baby boy is a source of pride to the family, while having a baby girl elicits expressions of sympathy and pity for her mother.

Male and female children are introduced differently to their sexual organs. On the one hand, a girl feels that her sexual organs are socially devalued in comparison to a boy's. His sexual organs

place him in a higher status and entitle him to more freedom in his movements. On the other hand, a girl is told that her virginity is something precious because it is related to family honour. So, it should be hidden and protected. Thus, girls grow up with a shameful and prohibited feeling towards their sexual organs, while boys learn to view their sexual organs with pride and dignity.

Throughout the socialization process male and female children are treated differently. Girls are not expected to be outspoken as boys are. A girl's voice should always be soft. Girls are encouraged to show respect and obedience to their brothers, even if they are younger. Boys are always encouraged to be self-controlled and not to show their emotions. When a little boy cries, he is scorned and told "What a shame you cry like a girl". It is assumed that a person usually cries when he or she is helpless. But since he is a boy, he should not be helpless and let problems defeat him; he should defeat them. In this way a boy is brought up having a positive feeling towards himself and his ability. He is strong, reliable and has self-control. When a girl cries, she is usually consoled and comforted because it is taken for granted that she is weak and helpless. She has no resource except her tears and it is a relief for her to cry. In this way, a girl is brought up having a negative attitude towards herself. She is weak, emotional and helpless.

Most women interviewed emphasized that there are general qualities that both boys and girls should have such as honesty, respect for elderly people, kindness..etc. But there are

distinctive qualities which are related to gender and cultural norms of "masculinity" and "femininity" in Saudi society. According to these norms, being feminine means to be shy, obedient, decent, quiet and modest. To be masculine means to be outspoken, brave, sociable and reliable. But above all a man has to be the breadwinner of his family. Masculinity in Saudi society is related to a man's financial ability to provide for his family's needs. A man's inability to support his family weakens his status and demeans his manhood. A Saudi proverb says "Nothing disgraces a man as much as his empty pocket". A teacher and a mother of four children portrays this point of view as follows:

I like my daughter to be proud of her femininity. To be a woman is to be feminine. I like my daughter to take care of her hair style, her dress, and to wear make-up properly. I have not enjoyed my life because I was always worried about people's opinion and gossip. Now I always say to my daughter, "Enjoy your life, but with respect for God's commands." I like my daughter to be decent and gentle. I like her to speak in a low voice. My son, I like him to be proud of his masculinity, to walk and behave like a man. I like him to have dignity and maintain his family, to be a reliable person.

A social worker and a mother of two children described her attitudes towards male and female characteristics as follows:

I think that the best qualities in a woman are to be shy, modest and obedient. My daughter is very obedient; when I ask her to bring anything, she runs quickly and fetches it. Boys are always disobedient and stubborn. My son (he is two years old) likes to have his own personality. He is difficult to control. I like my daughter to be a good housewife. I try to encourage her to help me with housework. She is three years old and she has started helping me in domestic work. She is feminine by nature. She adores her dollies. I always feel that she is a

little woman. My son, I like him to have a strong personality, to be sociable, and outspoken, and to be able to work and support his family. I don't like him to be shy and spoiled.

Most Saudi women interviewed indicate that girls' socialization is much easier than boys'. Because girls spend most of their time at home, they can easily be under the supervision of their parents. Boys, on the other hand, spend most of their time outside the home, which makes it difficult for parents to control them. A boy in Riyadh is allowed to visit his friends from the age of ten and sometimes earlier, while many girls are not allowed to visit their school friends until they get married.

Male and female children are not given the same opportunities to develop their capacities in Saudi society. As girls are excluded from public life, they lack the experiences that boys get from practice and exposure to the outside world. Girls are always expected to be confined to their homes, while boys are always pushed into the public sphere. One Saudi magazine has reported a true story of a girl who had a sex change operation. The story emphasizes the great happiness that her/his family felt about this change and the significant rights that were given to (her) him as he became a boy.

Fatmah was twenty years old, she was helping her father and sisters in herding sheep and cultivating their land in Al-Taief. Thus, she as well as her sisters could not go to school like their male brothers. As time passed, Fatmah started to notice some physical signs which were nearer to masculine than to feminine characteristics. She had much hair on her face and body, her voice had become deeper, her muscles became stronger while her breasts

were undeveloped. Although she had a severe pain in her abdomen, she had not menstruated. All her family members and even her mother started to suspect. So her father accompanied her to different hospitals in Mecca and Taief. Finally doctor x managed to diagnose the symptoms. He emphasized that she had all the characteristics of a man, but she needed only a small operation to be a man. During the last few days, the operation was done to change her from "Fatmah" to "Abdel-Rahman"....The father of Abdel-Rahman was over the moon. Although he has had six male children, he was extremely happy for his new son. Abdel-Rahman's brothers have decided to start an intensive educational course for him to catch up on what he has missed in the past. His sisters were extremely happy since the family body guards will have a new soldier. Although they envied him, they thanked God for what He has bestowed on their brother. As for Abdel-Rahman himself, he was so happy that he could not imagine what had happened to him... Four important things that worry him now. He wants to learn how to read and write as quickly as possible to join his educated brothers. He wants to learn to drive a car to help his father and compensate him for what he has done for him. He wants to go to Mecca for a visit to the holy place omrah to thank God for his gift and finally, he has asked God to guide him toward a good wife in the future (Al Shahrani 1984).

This story shows dramatically the extent to which male and female children are treated differently. Although, as I shall show women's experience varies according to family wealth, education, it is nevertheless true in a general sense that boys and girls are not given the same opportunities to develop their abilities. Being a girl in Saudi society means that your movements have to be restricted; your ambitions should be limited. You are not entitled to have the same rights as your brother.

As small children, boys and girls try to imitate their mothers in doing the housework; they try to sweep the carpet and clean tables. But boys are always scolded and are forbidden to do housework. They are told "What a disgrace for you to do women's

work, you should not do that." Small girls, on the other hand, are always encouraged and praised for doing any housework. Thus, a boy grows up having a negative attitude towards housework. It is feminine work, not appropriate for men to perform. Most women interviewed emphasized that girls should learn housework; they claimed that they encouraged their daughters to participate in housework as much as their school time permits. But they did not think that it was necessary for their sons to learn housework and they never asked them to do so. Nevertheless, the availability of foreign domestic help in most Saudi families nowadays, on the one hand, and the spread of female education, on the other, has meant that girls have to participate less in housework, and has also meant that training in domestic skills does not constitute as major a part of a girl's socialization in Riyadh, as it did in pre-oil Saudi society. The same point is mentioned by Al Eidan (1985).

Since Saudi society is passing through a transitional period, socialization processes are liable to change. Education, travelling abroad, and exposure to other cultures through reading or watching television or video programmes may affect the mode of socialization in Saudi society. Respondents were asked, "How would you compare the way you were brought up with the way you are bringing up your children?" Most women interviewed emphasized that there is a great difference between their ways and their mothers' ways of socializing their children. They were brought up to be absolutely obedient. They had no say in any of the decisions made. They were not allowed to visit or be visited. Physical punishment was the only

form of discipline used which was extremely humiliating. In contrast my informants argue that they pursue a "modern" mode of socialization. They are more considerate; they encourage their children to have an independent personality. From my observation and through long interviews, I can say that although women's attitudes towards child socialization have indeed changed, women are not the only persons who affect their children's values and principles. The whole community participates in socializing children, the kin, the school, the neighbourhood and the mass media.

Because the family in Riyadh has always been an extended family, there is no privacy among relatives. Grandparents, uncles and aunts feel that it is their responsibility to participate, or at least to give advice to, their children on what they think is the proper mode of behaviour. Thus, even if educated couples believe in a certain mode of socialization, the interference of relatives and society wide social restrictions on women may not enable them to apply them. A social worker and a mother of four children expressed this idea as follows:

I am afraid to say that there is no difference between the way I was brought up and the way I bring up my children; they are almost the same. I was always thinking that because I am more educated than my mother, I would bring up my children better than she did. But unfortunately, there is not so much difference between us. I used to criticize my mother for being very strict with me. Since she never allowed me to visit my friends, I always felt that she did not trust me. I thought I would be more understanding than my mother. But to be honest with you, I am not; I do the same things. I don't permit my daughter to visit her friends because society is still the same. I don't want to expose her to any

danger or to people's gossip.

Thus, it is not sufficient for parents to change their attitudes; society must be prepared to accept this change. Some educated women emphasize that they feel themselves in a dilemma because they cannot bring up their children the way they want to. Social pressures are stronger than they are.

A Woman's Life in a Sex-Segregated Society

Sex segregation, veiling and women's seclusion are the most noticeable phenomena relating to women in Riyadh. Women are expected to be secluded in their homes and conduct their lives separately from men. Customarily, a woman is not supposed to deal with men unveiled except for her close kin *mahram* whom she cannot marry. The concept of "seclusion" of woman is very ambiguous in practice. Ideally, Saudi women are expected to be confined to their homes and not to go out except for necessity. But actually, the strictness of this seclusion varies from woman to woman according to her socio-economic background. Women from both very rich and very poor families enjoy more freedom in their movements than do the majority of women. Women from wealthy families, who can afford to employ drivers, have more freedom to move about for shopping or visiting. They also have more chance to travel abroad instead of being restricted to their homes. On the other hand, economic necessity has pushed some women from poor families to work

as market sellers(1).

Sex segregation is an extension of the principles of seclusion. This practice dominates all aspects of public life. There is a strict separation between the sexes at schools and colleges, and in both workplace and leisure activities. All government offices are managed by men, except a few of them which have separate offices for women. All private companies, factories, shops, and supermarkets are staffed by men. There is a separation between sexes at all stages of education, from nursery to university. Boys' and girls' schools can be distinguished by looking at the high fences surrounding those for girls. Everything related to women should be excluded from men's eyes. The separation of the sexes is maintained and is consistently explained within the context of Islam. Although praying in the mosque is a duty for all Muslims whether male or female, in reality only men pray in the mosques. The religious authority of "Encouragement of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" is staffed by men. Saudi women are excluded from these roles.

There is a clear distinction between the world of a man and the world of a woman in Riyadh. Ideally, every Saudi house should have two separate rooms for entertaining male and female guests. A men's *majlis* is usually near the outside door, while a woman's *majlis* is inside the house. Some young couples, who cannot afford to have separate rooms for male and female guests, use the same room at different times. Male guests' movements are very restricted in a host's house. Female guests have more freedom and

feel more ease in their movements. It is common for female guests to help their hostess in serving the food or tea or coffee. Female guests could be entertained in any available room in the hostess's house. Sometimes I was entertained in a bedroom which was used as a living room as well. Men and women in a "traditional" Saudi family do not sit together or eat together. Women always move around in the household with a scarf on their heads. When a male member of the family wants to pass by, he usually makes a noise to indicate that women should be covered. However, with the breakdown of the extended family system, young couples tend to eat and sit together most of the time. Some informants who are still living in extended families still observe sex segregation rules. They do not talk or sit with their brothers-in-law in the same household unveiled.

It is noteworthy that mixing between sexes is more common in Jeddah than in Riyadh, even though Jeddah is nearer to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. AlTorki (1986) has mentioned that married women of the younger generation of elite families in Jeddah have more liberty in mixing with the men who enter their houses than do older women. In Riyadh, people are still very strict in observing segregation rules, even among relatives *aqarib*. But nevertheless, some signs of change have started to be visible among the younger generation; some Saudi men in Riyadh, who have studied abroad, now have mixed visits with their close friends. But at the same time, they will not allow their wives to meet their brothers-in-law or cousins, because they believe that it is customarily unacceptable.

Sex segregation rules and women's seclusion have enabled Saudi women to have their own lives apart from men. They have their own parties and round of visitings *dawreyah* where they can talk, exchange familial news, sing and dance freely away from men. Many Saudi women in Riyadh prefer female parties to mixed parties because they feel more comfortable away from men. A female lecturer, the wife of a doctor, emphasized that she felt more comfortable in female parties since in mixed parties, women are always looked upon and treated childishly. Their opinions are not considered as seriously as men's. Many Saudi women in Riyadh are thankful that sex segregation rules permit them to lead a sheltered and protected life.

At the same time, sex segregation rules put more restrictions on women's movements and limit their opportunities to enjoy their rights. Since most government offices are staffed by men, Saudi women do not have the same access to these offices as men do. Therefore, women are obliged to be dependent on men in order to deal with such government services. For example: if a woman wants to apply for a job, or needs a visa for a domestic help, or wants to pay electricity or telephone bills, or wants to go to court, or wants a passport, she needs to have a man to undertake these procedures for her. If a woman wants to travel, she has to have a *mahram* man to accompany her, or permission from her guardian to travel. Therefore, a Saudi woman is inclined to feel that she cannot survive without a man. Even if she is financially independent, a woman is not supposed to live in a separate house,

no matter what her education, occupation or age. A woman cannot leave the house without a male companion, even if he is only a small boy. Some Saudi women interviewed emphasized that social restrictions make them feel paralysed whenever they lack their husband or a driver to drive them from place to place. Some of them indicate that to have a driver nowadays has become more important than having a husband since most husbands, nowadays are reluctant to drive their families at any time or any place they want to.

Female Leisure Activities

In Riyadh, there are very few leisure activities for women outside the home. There is no cinema, no club, and no theatre for women. Leisure activities for married women are different from those of unmarried women. Unmarried women are more significantly restricted in their social activities. Leisure activities also vary between rich and poor families.

Married women from rich or well-to-do families pass their time in social visits, attending parties and weddings, and shopping. Shopping is regarded by most Saudi women as an entertainment. The social life of a married woman is divided among three different groups: her natal family, her husband's family, and her female friends. A woman whose husband has mixed parties will have a fourth group of mixed couples. After marriage, a woman is expected to make frequent visits to her natal family. She is also expected

to keep in touch with her family-in-law when residing neolocally. Women are agents of social cohesion, it is their role to cement relationships between families. A married woman usually has her own friends from work or schooldays, or a neighbourhood group where fashions, and current affairs are discussed, familial news is exchanged, new people are introduced, and brides for their male relatives are chosen. As AlTorki (1986: 100) indicates, social visits in Jeddah are very important in permitting married women to develop and strengthen their relationships with friends and relatives. There are certain occasions where social visits to relatives and friends by married women are considered to be a duty such as a wedding, death, sickness, birth, and other crises. Failure to fulfill these duties may lead to the termination of the relationships.

Women from poor families usually do not have leisure time. They spend their time in continuous work, either inside or outside their families. When they have the time and feel isolated, they go to visit their natal families or their families-in-law or their neighbours. Some women tend to visit a hospital to meet other women there. Some housewives I have met from low-income families indicated that when they feel absolutely tired and lonely, they ask their husbands to take them to see a doctor in any public hospital, primarily for the sake of meeting other women. This visit makes them happy. Sometimes they make this visit every week or twice a week. Most doctors I have met in Saudi hospitals complained about this phenomenon and how it wasted their time and

affects the health services.

Unmarried women spend their time watching television and video, or reading. An unmarried woman in Riyadh is seldom allowed to visit or to be visited; her social relations are restricted within the circle of close blood relatives such as uncles and aunts. An unmarried woman is absolutely under the supervision of her male kin.

Since houses in pre-oil Saudi society were very close to each other, women could easily move from one house to another. The urban expansion of Riyadh nowadays and the breakdown of the extended family system make many Saudi women feel isolated from each other. It is difficult for a woman to move from house to house without a car or unaccompanied by a man. Saudi women in Riyadh rarely use public transport. And since women are not allowed to drive their own cars, they feel restricted to their home. With the easy availability of domestic servants and household appliances, women have more time to spare, and many housewives suffer from boredom.

Women and Marriage

The restrictions on women's movements in general, and on those of unmarried women in particular, have made present-day Saudi women more and more dependent on men. Most unmarried Saudi women look upon marriage and family life as their only area of freedom. In Saudi Arabia, marriage is highly valued; it is regarded as a moral

defence, a safeguard to women and a protection to social order.

Since sexual relations outside the institution of marriage are strictly prohibited, marriage is considered as the most appropriate goal for every Saudi, whether male or female. According to Islamic teachings, marriage is a religious duty, a social demand, and a biological necessity (Abdel Ati 1971). Marriage is a transitional step to adulthood. A Saudi boy or girl is regarded as a man or a woman when he or she gets married. The age of marriage is not limited in Saudi society. As soon as a girl reaches puberty, she can marry. Early marriages are more common among poor families in Riyadh, where women have no other option except to be a mother and housewife.

Thus, there is a strong emphasis on women getting married in Saudi society. Marriage for Saudi women is not a matter of settling down; it is a decisive requirement for a happy life. Saudi women feel that marriage and motherhood are the main sources of their power and respect in society. A woman establishes her identity when she gets married. Whatever her education or occupation, she is usually known through her menfolk. Marriage improves a woman's status in her community. As an unmarried woman she occupies the bottom of the female social hierarchy. Marriage places her in a better situation, and her status is usually determined according to that of her husband, except in those rare cases where the wife's social status is higher than her husband's. Marriage is considered by most Saudi women as one of the laws of nature *sunnat al hayah* by which they mean that it is an

inevitable need for women, a requirement without which women could not live or survive. It is assumed that every girl should marry and have children. All respondents emphasized the importance of marriage. Some of them go as far as to say that their lives only began when they got married.

The definition of what "marriage" means varies from woman to another. Some women conceive of marriage as a turning point in their whole lives. Their whole life has been changed by marriage. Marriage is considered as the most important event in their lives. Being married enables them to be known as individuals, to visit and be visited, to complete their education and to participate in decision making. A thirty year old woman married for six years and with one three year old daughter, who is working in private business and whose husband is a teacher at university, expressed her views on the importance of marriage as follows:

Marriage for me was the beginning of life. Before that I was nothing. I was not given any chance to grow up intellectually. I could not go with my brothers to study abroad. I could not go to a bookshop. I could not visit my friends. Everything was forbidden. Now all these restrictions are removed. These changes could not have happened without marriage. Marriage makes me feel independent.

The pressure on Saudi women to get married is so strong that some Saudi girls feel that they are obliged to marry even if they are not prepared and do not wish to get married. Marriage for them is a social duty which has to be accomplished. It is a membership card which has to be obtained to be accepted in Saudi society.

This conception is represented in the words of one respondent. She is twenty-eight years old and is a secretary at a school; her husband is a policeman. They have been married for eight years and have three children:

Marriage is the wicked thing that has to be done. It is essential for women particularly in our society where women cannot go out or cannot travel without a man. There is an Arabic proverb that says: "A shadow of a man is better than a shadow of a wall."

Marriage is regarded by most Saudi women as a safeguard and a protection of a woman's reputation. Saudi society not only enjoins a woman to marry but sanctions her for not being married. Sanctions against unmarried women range from spreading malicious gossip about them to looking upon them with sympathy and pity. Many respondents emphasized that they got married because they did not like to be called a spinster. A twenty-six year old teacher, who has been married for four years to a man who is also a teacher and who has two children, said:

Marriage is the safeguard sater of a woman. A married woman s position is different from that of an unmarried woman. It is enough when people look upon unmarried woman with pity and sympathy. If a woman does not get married until her twenties, people will spread rumours about her. They will say "Maybe she is not beautiful or maybe there is something wrong with her behaviour". Marriage saves a woman s reputation. An unhappy marriage is sometimes better than being a spinster. People look with respect upon a married woman. Even with my own family, I feel that they treated me better after I got married.

This point of view is supported by another respondent, a

social worker from a rich family whose husband is an engineer. They have been married for thirteen years and have three children:

Marriage is very important to a woman for social and emotional reasons. A woman cannot have children without marriage. Marriage saves a woman's reputation. If a woman does not get married people will spread rumours about her. So many girls get married to avoid people's gossip. A girl in her family house has a very comfortable life. She knows that marriage does not usually guarantee that a woman is going to lead the same way of life. But nevertheless, she gets married because she is afraid of people's gossip.

Some Saudi women conceive of marriage principally as an important step towards motherhood. They argue that women are born to be mothers. It is the primary function for women, and women cannot achieve this goal without marriage. A thirty-eight year old headmistress who has been married to a businessman for four years and has two children said:

Marriage is the law of nature, *sunnat al hayah*. It is a holy relationship between man and woman. Women are born to be mothers. Being a mother is a great experience for women, and marriage is the only way to achieve this goal.

A few respondents indicated that marriage was important for them because it enabled them to be housewives. Being a housewife is a goal in itself. They claim that every girl looks forward to being a housewife *set-al-beit*. Marriage gives a woman the chance to be independent, to have a separate home where she can perform her domestic responsibilities away from control of more senior women. Marriage makes a woman feel that she is a responsible

person and that she is needed. It is interesting to mention that most respondents who support this point of view are newly married. And for them, marriage is still a new experience. A twenty-one year old woman, a mother of one child, said:

Every single girl is looking forward to being a housewife, to having a separate home where she can invite her friends. The home is a woman's empire where she can do everything she wants. She is the director of household affairs. Marriage gives meaning to my life. It makes me feel that I am a responsible person. I have to look after my son; I have to cook the food. Everything at home is my own responsibility.

Arranged Marriage

Arranged marriage is the most common type of marriage in Riyadh. Forty-six out of fifty respondents married by arranged marriage, while only four have "love" marriages. Most Western readers feel uncomfortable with the idea of arranged marriages. A large part of this discomfort has to do with the Western assumption that passionate love should be the only basis for marriage. But the situation is not the same for Saudi people who believe that romantic love will come after marriage if the marriage is rationally and strongly established. Marriage in Saudi society is not only a relationship between two persons, it is also a blood relationship between two families. As I have mentioned before, endogamous marriage has been the preferred marriage for Saudis. By endogamy I mean marriage from the same patronymic group or the same lineage. FBD marriage was the most common type of marriage

in Riyadh. It is noteworthy that endogamous marriage is arranged by men. One of the examples of how marriages are arranged in Saudi society is represented in the following case.

Hessah and Ahmed were cousins; they were brought up in the same household. He was six years older than she. As they grew up they used to hear people saying, "Hessah for Ahmed." They accepted this as a fact. When she was fourteen years old, Ahmed asked her hand from her father; her father asked him to wait for a few years. Two years later, at her sister's wedding to his elder brother, Ahmed asked for her hand again and urged his uncle to write their marriage contract on the same day and "kill two birds with one stone." His uncle accepted the idea and wrote the marriage contract without asking Hessah's opinion.

Although endogamous marriage is favoured in Saudi Arabia, signs of change have started to appear, particularly in urban areas. New generations tend to practise exogamy. Thirty-four out of fifty respondents have non-kin marriages and only sixteen have kin marriages; five cases have FBS marriage, seven cases were married to mother's-brother's-son, and four cases were married to men from the same lineage.

It is noteworthy that because of sex segregation and veiling in Saudi society, women play an important role in exogamous marriage procedures. They have a considerable influence in choosing a suitable bride for their son or brother. This phenomenon has also been noticed in Morocco, where women play an important role in arranged marriages (Maher 1974).

When a man is ready to marry, he expresses his desire and his requirements for his future wife to his family. A groom's mother

and sisters are usually the ones who choose the bride from their relatives, neighbours and friends. Nowadays, the existence of schools and colleges has facilitated women's task and made it easier for a woman to find a bride among her school mates. Many marriages have taken place through these institutions. After finding the suitable bride, it is usually the groom's mother or sister who approaches the bride or her mother to sound out their opinion, before the formal procedures are initiated between men. A further example indicates the way in which some marriages are organized by women nowadays.

Jawaher and Samia were teachers at the same secondary school. Samia chose Jawaher for her uncle, who is working as an engineer, and approached her about the possibility of marriage. Jawaher asked her to bring his photo and to tell her everything about him. Jawaher accepted the offer, but she stated that she would like to know him more, by phoning her at home. He phoned her several times and they got to know each other. Finally Jawaher agreed and asked him to ask her hand from her father, and they got married.

This example shows how the younger generation try to make a compromise between tradition and modernity in marriage without destroying the rules of sex segregation. Before giving any answer to the groom, the bride's father tries to get as much information as possible about the groom and his family. The most important thing that Saudis in Riyadh consider in choosing a partner is the matching between the ethnic groups of spouses. As I have mentioned before, most Najdis feel that they are of "pure" tribal descent. To protect this purity they generally refuse to give their

daughters to anyone who is not of the same tribal origin or whose lineage is not as good as their own. Najdis lay great emphasis on marrying spouses from the same ethnic category.

The second thing that Saudi people consider in choosing partners is family status. Family status is usually related to family wealth. "Big" families are usually the wealthy families in Riyadh. Some other factors are also relevant in choosing suitable partners such as the man's degree of adherence to Islamic teachings, his education, and his occupation.

Saudi women do not always take into account the same factors in choosing a partner as their guardians do. Many respondents emphasized that the first thing they looked at in choosing a partner was his adherence to Islamic teachings, secondly his personality, and thirdly his education. They indicated that they would rather marry grooms who have the same level of education or higher. However, I have come across a few cases of women university graduates who were married to men with less education than themselves but who came from the same ethnic group and the same family status. For those women educational differences were not necessarily a problem between spouses. Men and women are seen as naturally different, and they are expected to perform different duties in life. Thus, the two sexes should not be evaluated by the same criteria. Finally, women tend to consider a man's occupation; and his income as the last things they took into consideration.

The Bride's Consent to Marriage

According to Islamic teachings, a marriage contract is not valid if the bride does not give her consent to the union. But actually, the final decision in choosing the partner is usually taken by the bride's male kin, and this is for several reasons. The bride is usually informed of suitable prospective grooms only, that is those who are considered to be socially and financially equal to her family. A bride may be given the chance to choose from a range of such suitors. But she is not usually informed of the unsuitable ones. It is said that because men have more access to public life, they have various opportunities to collect information about a potential groom. Thus, they are thought to have a more informed opinion about the groom and would be more able to make the right decision.

Since most girls are brought up to be dependent and obedient, they feel afraid to challenge their family's decisions. Thus, it is very rare for a Saudi woman to marry against her family's will. To do so would mean that she would lose her family's support if her husband mistreats her in the future.

Most respondents emphasized that they were asked their consent before the marriage contract (2). But they also indicated that the decision concerning choice of partner was mainly taken by their male guardians. They gave their approval to their guardians' choice because, in their view, it were based on objective and reasonable premises.

My data show that forty-one out of fifty respondents married

within the same ethnic group. Three marriages took place between Hejazi women and Najdi men, one marriage took place between a Najdi woman and Hejazi man. These mixed marriages usually take place among Najdi families who are living in Hejaz and have a close relationship with Hejazi people. Two marriages took place between *khadeiry* women and *kabeily* men. Both marriages are "love" marriages and have taken place between spouses who were studying abroad. But there is no case among respondents of marriages between a *kabeily* woman and a *khadeiri* man. Because Saudi society is a patrilineal society, Najdi men find it easier to take non-Najdi women than to give their daughters to non-Najdi men. Three marriages took place between Saudi women and men of other nationalities. One of these marriages is a Najdi woman and two are Hejazis.

Marriage between Saudi women and non-Saudi men is a recent phenomenon in Saudi society. It is more common among educated women, particularly doctors. A striking phenomenon in Saudi society is the increasing number of spinsters among educated women. According to Saudi norms, a girl is considered a spinster if she reaches her middle twenties unmarried. Since most Saudi men do not accept marriage with women who have the same level of education or a higher one than their own, educated women feel that their chances of marriage decrease as they get higher education. Most Saudi men believe that men should have a greater amount of education because they are the providers of the family maintenance. Female higher education is thought to cause dysfunction within the family

structure. A university graduate man expresses this idea as follows:

I think the marriage of a female university graduate to a non-graduate man will definitely be a failure because there is no suitability and balance between them. The man is likely to feel inferior beside his educated wife. But I don't think that there will be any problems for non-graduate women who marry a university graduate man (Anon 1986).

Saudi Conceptions of Arranged Marriage

Saudi males and females accept arranged marriage because it is the common type of marriage there. It is thought to be successful since it has existed for hundreds of years. Men and women are brought up to believe that arranged marriage is more successful since it is based on objective rather than emotional criteria. Looking at love marriages in other countries, they find that not all love marriages are successful and at the same time not all arranged marriages are failures. Most Saudi people believe in fate and divine decree. To have a successful marriage does not depend on a person's right decision but on his or her destiny. Most respondents believe that marriage is a matter of luck.

If the groom is accepted, he is expected to offer a bride-price *mahr* for his bride. In Saudi society *mahr* is the amount of money that is offered by the groom to his bride as her own property. According to the teachings of Islam, there is no fixed amount of *mahr*. In fact the koran indicates that the *mahr* maybe as high as a hundredweight (one quintal) of gold or silver. A *mahr* in Saudi

Arabia is not the same as the bride-price which anthropologists refer to in Africa (Evans Pritchard 1979). And it is unlike the dowry which the bride's family offers to the groom in India (PerLee 1981; Comaroff 1980). The *mahr* is entirely a bride's own property. It is usually used in buying gold for the bride and regarded as a guarantee for a woman in the future.

The amount of *mahr* is determined by various factors, including the status of the bride's family, the closeness of blood relationship between the spouses, and the virginity of the bride. Thus, the higher the bride's family status, the more *mahr* is expected to be paid. Relatives are usually paid less than non-relatives, and a previously unmarried bride *albikr* is usually more expensive than a divorced or widowed woman *tayyib*.

A striking phenomenon in recent Saudi marriage is the sudden increase in *mahr*. The amount of *mahr* has dramatically increased over the last twenty years. My data show that there is a significant relationship between the amount of *mahr* and the increase of wealth in Saudi society. While the average *mahr* in those cases of couples who married before 1970 was around S.R. 5,000(3), the amount of *mahr* ranged from S.R.20,000 to S.R.50,000 in 1980, reaching S.R.100,000 in rich families,(see table V.3). The average *mahr* of my fifty respondents was S.R.22,100. AlTorki (1986) has mentioned that *mahr* in Jeddah among elite families has reached S.R.100,000 and sometimes it reaches S.R.200,000(4)

The oil boom has affected all aspects of life in Saudi society and the *mahr* is one of these. It is not only the *mahr* that has

been increasing but also the bride's present *shabka*, which the groom offers to his bride on the wedding day. This usually consists of pure gold and diamonds. The wedding party itself costs a fortune. The average cost of a wedding in Saudi Arabia today would not be less than one hundred thousand Saudi riyal. The bride usually spends the *mahr* on jewellery and dresses. Most respondents emphasized that they were given their *mahr* and they spent it on their own expenses or saved part of it.

In a few cases the bride's father got hold of the *mahr* and gave part of it to the bride. This finding is different from what AlManaa (1982: 201) has found in bedouin areas of the Eastern region, where the *mahr* is usually given to the bride's guardian who gives her only small amount and keeps the rest for himself. Marriage expenses have become so high that not all Saudi men can afford to marry. Some Saudi men have found it more economic to marry non-Saudi brides, and some are obliged to delay marriage. It is worth noting that women in contemporary Saudi society get slightly more power in controlling their *mahr* than in "traditional" Saudi society.

Polygamy:

According to most interpretations of Islam, a man has the right to marry up to four wives at the same time, provided he treats them fairly and equally. As I have mentioned before, polygamy increased directly after the discovery of oil,

particularly in urban areas. But in the last few years with the spread of education, the exposure to other cultures, the rise in the cost of living, and the increase in the amount of *mahr*, polygamy has dramatically declined. But the fear of having a co-wife still threatens many women and making them continually worry about the risk of having another wife who shares their home and their husbands' affection. During my field work, women frequently mentioned stories of men who suddenly took a second wife after a long period of first marriage. Women tend to repeat that men should not be trusted. A female lecturer said:

A woman should not trust her husband. A man can marry a second wife at any time he wants; nobody can blame him. Do you know, although my husband is a good man, I always have a feeling that he is going to marry again. I always prepare myself to accept this event if it happens, because many men think that it is their right in Islam to marry whenever they want to.

Divorce:

Islam permits divorce, but does not encourage it. The Prophet stated that the most disliked yet permissible act in Islam was divorce. According to Islamic doctrine, divorce is permitted under certain conditions in which spouses feel that it is impossible to continue to be truly happy together. Men hold the right to initiate divorce without resort to a court, while a woman can obtain divorce by her husband's consent or by petitioning a court. It is important to mention that the court is something new in Saudi Arabia. In early Islam, there was no courts, women used to turn to

elderly people in their tribes to ask for divorce. With the growing of urbanization in Saudi Arabia, courts have been established to solve family problems. This step has made the procedures of getting divorce more complicated than before. Women have the right to dissolve the marriage through the court under certain circumstances such as long absence of or desertion by the husband, mistreatment, impotence, and physical or financial inability (Abdel Ati 1977: 244). There are other cases where a woman can dissolve the marriage without any court or the husband's consent. These cases include the "delegated divorce" in which the husband agrees in the marriage contract to transfer his right of divorce to his wife. Consequently, the woman has the power to free herself from marriage if and when she desires. There is also the "suspended" or "conditional" divorce, in which the woman declares at the time of the marriage contract that if the husband does certain specified acts which are contrary to his wife's wish, she will divorce him (Abdul Ati 1971: 406).

In practice, most Saudi women do not enjoy these rights, either because they do not know about them or because they are considered to be against Saudi traditions. If a woman fails to have a happy marriage and wants to be separated from her husband, she has to discuss the matter first with her parents or her kinsmen to get their approval and support. Her father or brother tries to negotiate with her husband and ask for divorce. If they fail to solve the problem, they try to seek support from the elderly people in the husband's family. Sometimes they try to persuade the

husband to divorce by repaying some or all the *mahr* he had originally paid, although it is not legally his right to get back his *mahr* once married. If all these attempts do not succeed, they go to court. The court is usually the last step that people pursue.

Although Islam makes it clear that husbands should not use this right of divorce except for hopeless cases, some men misuse this right to threaten women. During my fieldwork, I came across a few cases where husbands used their right of divorce to prevent their wives from going to work by saying: "Do not go to your work today, if you go, you will be divorced." These wives did not go to work on these days in order to preserve their marriage.

Male /Female Relations in Riyadh:

Usually, young couples in Riyadh start their first years of marriage living with the grooms' family until they have their first child and can afford to set up a separate home. My data show that twenty-one out of fifty respondents started their first years of marriage living with their parents. Nineteen of these twenty-one lived with the groom's family and two with the bride's family. Of the nineteen couples who resided patrilocally, eight are still living in an extended family setting. With the increase of wealth in Saudi society, more young couples can afford to have separate houses. Twenty-nine women interviewed started their marriages living in nuclear families. Most of these respondents married

during the last ten years. However, it is noteworthy that financial factors are not the only reason for maintaining the extended family. Although some couples could afford to have a separate home of their own, they still maintain a patrilocal residence pattern. This is either because they want to preserve the unity of the family or because they are the eldest or only son in their natal families and thus feel a sense of responsibility toward them.

Because most marriages in Riyadh are not based on romantic love, both spouses usually enter marriage with a realistic picture of married life. There are few expectations or mutual promises between partners. Everyone expects to find good and bad things in his or her spouse. Women are usually more prepared to make sacrifices than men. Most respondents emphasized that women are always expected to be more patient so as to keep their married life intact. Saudi women are told that the more suffering they have, the more they will be rewarded in the future and many Saudi women believe what they are told. However, the spread of T.V series and video films is thought by men to have negatively affected women's attitudes towards marital relations.

According to Saudi norms, all that women need from marriage are a home and children. Saudi cultural norms consider displaying love and affection as feminine behaviour; most men in Riyadh tend to control their feelings and do not show love or emotion to their wives and children. Most Saudis do not look upon the intimate relationship between husband and wife as an important factor for

the success of the marital relationship. It is always thought that if a man is well off financially and provides all his family's needs, his wife does not have the right to ask for more. Feelings and emotions are regarded as something marginal beside financial matters. However, the spread of education and exposure to other cultures through T.V and video programmes make young brides tend to expect more love and affection from their grooms than Saudi men are used to giving.

The relationship between husband and wife in Riyadh is not as authoritarian as it used to be. The spread of education and female employment have improved the status of women in the family. Women have started to participate in family decision-making. In addition, the breakdown of the extended family system has freed women from the authority of their in-laws. Husbands and wives in nuclear families tend to eat together and spend more time together. The conception of the marital relation among young couples has changed significantly. While the elderly women discussed in the last chapter emphasized that their relationship with their husbands was very formal, with great respect shown to their husbands, most younger women I interviewed emphasized that their own relationship with their husband was different from their mothers relationships with their father. They argue that their mothers were absolutely subjugated to their fathers; they had no say in decision-making. But they see their own relation with their husbands as based on mutual respect and understanding.

But I would like to emphasize that, in a developing country

like Saudi Arabia where there are significant educational, intellectual, and financial differences among people, it is difficult to assume that all people have the same conception of the marital relationships. Some spouses have a more understanding and egalitarian relationship than others.

Women who are living in extended families do not have a say in family decision-making. The mother-in-law maintains a great power over young women in the same household. Most extended families still have separate male and female spatial domains. Women usually eat together and sit together; men usually eat first and women eat later. Men in extended families are more conservative in not participating in domestic work. Some respondents who are still living with their families-in-law claim that their husbands feel embarrassed to help them with housework in front of their fathers or brothers. Living as a nuclear family lessens the strict spatial segregation among members of the family. Women in nuclear families feel more power over the household affairs. They are more independent of their family-in-law.

The Sexual Division of Labour :

Many Saudi men in Riyadh treat the sexual division of labour as a natural division, stemming from biological differences between the sexes. They believe that the reproductive functions of women determine their duties in the family.

The mode of interpretation of Islam in Saudi Arabia supports

this sexual division of labour. The interpretations of Islam today is greatly affected by the Wahabi interpretation of Islam, which maintains conservative attitudes towards women. Thus, a Saudi religious authority explained the sexual division of labour in Islam as follows:

The issue of female employment has never been discussed in Muslim countries. We could say that it is a recent issue. Muslims have never discussed it before because it is taken for granted that a woman's work is in her home. She should go out on certain occasions only, but not for paid work as men do. Women should be supported by their fathers or brothers when they are growing up and by their husbands when they have reached maturity. This is the basis of Islam (Al Barrak 1985).

According to this interpretation of Islam, unmarried women are always expected to be dependent on their fathers or brothers before marriage, and on their husbands after marriage. Thus, although Islam guarantees many economic rights to women, including the right to hold property in their own names, the right to keep the *mahr* for herself and the right to maintain this property and invest it without any interference of her father or husband, in contemporary Saudi society these rights are significantly restricted (AlManaa 1982: 233).

In Riyadh, a man marries because he needs a woman to cook his food, clean his house, produce children who perpetuate his name and maintain his household affairs. In return for that, he is expected to look after his family and supply his wife's and his children's needs. A man's economic position as the breadwinner of the family gives him power over the household affairs; women should not leave

their homes or seek paid jobs without their husbands' consent.

Not all Saudi men allow their wives to work even if they are in need of money. Because it is not socially acceptable for a woman to seek a paid job, some men consider it demeaning for them to let their wives or daughters work. Few Saudi men from well-to-do families refuse to let their wives contribute to the family budget because it is seen as a humiliation to their masculinity.

However, although it is true that women have little authority they do have some power within their families as we saw in the last chapter. A woman uses different strategies to manipulate her husband and to affect his decision making: by persuading him to do what she wants, by using her sexuality to persuade him to do what she wants, and by asking support from her family or family-in-law to intercede in his decisions.

Motherhood

Motherhood is highly valued in Saudi society. According to Saudi culture "womanhood" and "motherhood" are two sides of the same coin. A woman accomplishes her natural role when she becomes a mother. A bride is not expected to use any contraception until she has her first baby. People in Riyadh usually expect the bride to have her first child by the end of her first year of marriage. 34 out of 50 respondents did not use any contraceptive method until they had their first baby so as to be sure of their fertility.

Saudi women feel that having children, especially male children, improves their status and enhances their power in their families. Motherhood for Saudi women is not only a source of satisfaction but an insurance of a woman's status in her marriage.

As I have mentioned before, most Saudi women feel that men are not to be trusted. A man could marry at any time he wants, leaving his wife and children helpless. Her children are the only people to whom a mother can turn for help. They are a source of support to their mothers in the future. An Arabic proverb says: "A woman who trusts a man is like a woman who trusts water in a sieve."

My data show that Saudi women place a heavy emphasis on the importance of children. Some Saudi women have children even if they are not happily married, because they feel that children are a source of security for them in the future. A female teacher said:

Children are everything in a woman's life. A husband is another family's son, but children are my own. Children are the most precious things in a woman's life. If she brings them up properly, they will take care of her when she becomes old. A man likes his wife as long as she is young and beautiful. But as she becomes old, he may look for another young woman. A good example of this is my mother-in-law. Her husband has left her after having eight children. He married a young new wife. Nobody takes care of her now except her children.

Since many Saudis think that children are the main goal of marriage, it should follow that a woman who succeeds in fulfilling this aim should have no worries about her husband marrying again. Some women tend to have children because they think that children are the best way to keep their husbands. They assume that the more

children they have, the more unlikely it becomes for their husbands to marry again. Thus, some women tend to have more children to fulfill their husbands' demands. Some respondents claimed that if they had not had children, their husbands would have divorced them or would have married other women. A female lecturer said:

Most Saudi men believe that children are a family asset. They perpetuate the family name. Women usually produce children to please their husbands. For me, children are emotionally important to me to satisfy my desire for motherhood. By having children, I hope the future will be better. Children are also important for the existence of the family. I think that if I had not had children, my husband would have married another woman to give him children.

Part of women's insistence on having children in Saudi society is derived from Islam. Some Saudi women believe that using contraceptive methods is against Islamic teachings. Having children is a religious duty for which women will be rewarded. A woman teacher said:

God says wealth and children are the ornaments of life. Children are a gift from God, which we have to thank him for. Children are a women's support in the future. When a woman becomes old, she has nobody to ask for help except God and her children. If a woman has many children, at least one or two of them would be good and look after her in the future.

Some respondents argue that motherhood and femininity are closely related. A woman is at her most feminine when she becomes a mother. A female bank teller said:

When a woman becomes a mother, she reaches the height of

her femininity. There is nothing that could symbolise a woman's femininity more than children. Children are the real love in a woman's life. They are the most precious thing for women.

A Few respondents claim that having children is a matter of habit. Couples who belong to "big" families with many children are said to have more children than couples who come from small families. A teacher said:

Children are a family asset; big families usually have many children to perpetuate their family names. My family is big and my husband's family is big too. Thus, I can't imagine that during all my life, I am going to have two or three children only. If God wishes -insha'a allah-, I am going to have many children, the same number as my brothers and sisters are (eight brothers and sisters). As long as I am healthy and financially well off, I'll have children.

Actually, it is not a matter of habit, but a financial matter. People who belong to "big" families have the financial ability to have more children and can afford to employ domestic help who lessen the domestic housework. Although the value system in Saudi Arabia encourages having children, the spread of education delays the age of marriage among educated women which consequently shortens the years of fertility for women. Thus, educated women tend to have fewer children than their mothers. Al Suwaigh has indicated that young women in the Eastern province in Saudi Arabia tend to have fewer children than their mothers did. While 77 per cent of younger mothers said three to four children was their ideal number of children, only 19 per cent of mothers from the older

generation agreed on this number. 36 per cent of older mothers said that seven or more children was their ideal number of children whereas no mother of the younger generation chose to have seven or more children (Al Suwaigh 1984: 105). Education affects women's attitudes towards the size of the family. Women have become more aware of their rights to control their bodies. Although there are no family planning centres in Saudi Arabia, many young women in Riyadh tend to use contraceptive methods, some of them doing so behind their husbands' backs.

Attitudes Toward Female Equality in Saudi Society .

It is important to mention that educated women's conception of themselves is different from men's conceptions of women. According to Saudi male ideology, men are assumed to be mentally and physically superior to women. Women are assumed to be weak, emotional creatures. They can easily be persuaded. They do not have the ability to make the right decisions. Women and children are always placed on the same level. Women are neither looked on nor treated as adults. They should always be protected, kept secure and guided. There is a Saudi proverb that says: "A woman and a small child think that a man is capable of doing everything they want".

Masculinity in Saudi society is considered an honour bestowed on man by God. It is assumed to be the basis of a natural superiority over women. Femininity, on the other hand, is

considered to be a natural defect. It is always claimed that nature determines women's subordination. A Saudi newspaper explains the difference between femininity and masculinity in Saudi society as follows:

Man is superior to woman. While masculinity is an honour and perfection, femininity is a natural defect. That is why women do need to wear make-up and ornaments to cover their physical deficiency, contrary to men whose beauty is embedded in their masculinity (Anon 1985)

Women's conception of themselves is fundamentally marked by the general ideology in the society. Most Saudi women believe that men and women are different. These biological differences have entitled them to different rights and duties. Men and women are expected to perform different roles in life. Women have the right to be protected and be financially supported by their husbands. However most Saudi women believe in "complementarity" between sexes. Most women interviewed believe that man and woman are physically different, but not mentally. Most women feel that they are intellectually equal to men if not better. But social restrictions do not enable them to use all their capacities.

Saudi women's conception of "equality" is vague. While most women support equality between sexes at the workplace, not all Saudi women feel comfortable with the idea of equality in family life. For them, the concept of equality derives from Western societies, from feminism and sexual libertarianism. Many Saudi women feel threatened by equality. They feel that it is something that conflicts with their understanding of Islamic teachings, with

their customs and traditions, and with their conceptions of masculinity and femininity. They think that equality might lead to men losing their masculinity and women losing their femininity.

Most women feel happier to use the concept of "sharing" or "cooperation" in this connexion. They argue that both men and women can help each other inside and outside the home. But the sexual division of labour should still exist and be respected. Although most women interviewed contribute to their family's budget, they do not feel obliged to do so. They still consider it to be their right to be maintained by their husbands. They emphasized that it is the man's responsibility to work and provide for his family's necessities. Most women interviewed indicated that equality could lead to the breakdown of family structure and confusion of the sexual division of labour. A female headmistress' assistant said:

I am against equality; man is a man, woman is a woman. Everyone has different rights and duties according to their physical differences. How can we equalize between them if God does not equalize them. A man should be the boss of the family; he should be respected and appreciated. That does not mean that women are not respected; women should be respected and treated kindly. But a man should be the head of the family, and he has to make the final decisions in family affairs.

It is interesting to mention that most respondents argue that since men and women are doing the same job they should have the same salaries. But since they perform different roles in the family, they should have different rights and duties in the family. It is important to mention that women in Saudi society are officially

entitled to have the same salary for doing the same job. A teacher said:

I agree with equality between men and women in the workplace but not in the family. I believe that women should have the same salaries for doing the same work. But I don't agree with equality in the family. I would be unhappy if I saw my husband cleaning or wiping the floor; he would lose my respect. It is okay for him to drink and put his cup back in the kitchen but not to do the washing up.

Thus, most women accept inequality between sexes. The interpretation of Islam in Saudi Arabia encourages them to treat their oppression as part of their destiny. It is something they have to live with and accept, just as they accept the shape of their nose or the colour of their skin.

It is noteworthy that some women from rich families I interviewed were very strongly opposed to equality. Because they enjoy some of the privileges of their families, they strongly oppose equality. They emphasize that they are much happier than women in Western countries, who struggle for equality. A doctor and a wife of a businessman said:

Equality! Equality in what? I don't like to have the same rights as men, because I don't have the same duties as they do. I don't like to have a full time job like my male colleagues. I don't dream of being a director at the hospital. There is no comparison between a man and a woman in our society. Men have far more responsibilities than women. In Western countries, women ask for equality because women have to work and contribute to the family budget. But in our society, women are protected and sheltered. A woman does not have to work to support her family. It is a man's responsibility. I think Islam gives women more rights than Western laws. We don't want equality. A man is the breadwinner of the family. A woman

in our society is regarded as a precious diamond that needs to be protected.

A few respondents support equality. They argue that physical differences between sexes should not mean superiority of one sex over the other. Men and women should be given the same opportunities and facilities to enable them to get the best out of their abilities. They argue that men in Saudi society are given more and varied opportunities to mature intellectually. Social restrictions limit women's options and curb their ambitions. A businesswoman said:

Equality is justice and fairness. Who hates justice? Justice is respected and demanded by all people. Some people think that equality means conflict between men and women. But it is not true. Equality means respecting each other's rights as human beings.

Most women who support equality in Riyadh are educated women who were given the chance to be in contact with Western cultures. But their conception of equality does not mean rejecting their own culture. Women always feel that they have to make a balance between their attitudes towards equality and the social beliefs in the society.

Conclusion:

This chapter has given a general picture of women's lives in

Riyadh, as they see and experience them. Socialization, education, and the interpretation of Islam have helped to perpetuate previous patterns of gender relations in Riyadh. The influx of oil in Saudi Arabia has had some positive and negative effects on women's lives. The increase of wealth has enabled the Saudi government to open many female schools all over the kingdom. Female paid work has become accessible to educated women. The spread of foreign domestic equipment and domestic help has lessened the burden of housework. (70 per cent of my sample had access to domestic help). And the breakdown of the extended family system has given women more power in participating in their families' affairs.

But at the same time, the influx of wealth has enabled many Saudi men to employ foreign workers and to seclude their women. And the urban growth of Riyadh combined with the increased prevalence of nuclear family residence, has made women more isolated from each other, suffering more from boredom and isolation. Social restrictions on Saudi women make them look upon marriage as their only area of freedom, and at the same time the sexual division of labour in Saudi family puts men in a superior position over women.

Footnotes

(1) Most women who are working as market sellers in Riyadh belong to families from slaves background.

(2) Marriage contract is a certain paper written by the presence of a both parties or their delegators (wakeil), a certain man who is working in Marriage Court, and at least two witnesses. In the marriage contract the dowry, the acceptance of both parties is clear, and any conditions both parties want to be followed and respected through marital relations.

(3) S.R. 5,000 is equal to \$ 1,4000

(4) S.R. 100,000 is equivalent to \$ 33,000

Table V.1

Saudi Arabian Annual Production of Crude oil
(millions of U.S. Barrel) from 1938 to 1983.

Years	Oil Production
1938	0.5
1946	59.6
1950	199.5
1955	356.6
1959	421.0
1963	651.8
1965	804.9
1967	1,023.8
1969	1,173.9
1971	1,740.6
1973	2,772.6
1975	2,582.5
1979	3,479.4
1981	3,579.5
1983	1,657.0

Source: El Mallakh 1982: 55 and The Ministry of
Planning 1970-1984: 192.

Table V.2

Increase in Oil Production and Revenue 1950-1975

	1950	1960	1970	1971	1973	1974	1975
Year-end posted price,Arabian Light Crude (US \$ per barrel)	1.75	1.80	1.80	2.29	5.04	11.25	12.38
Saudi Arabia crude oil production (million barrels per day)	0.55	1.32	3.80	4.77	7.60	8.48	7.07
Saudi Government annual oil revenue (US \$ million)	57	334	1,214	1,885	4,340	22,574	25,676

Source: The Ministry of Planning 1980:11

Table V.3

The Distribution of Mahr according to date and amount in Thousand of Saudi Riyals.

time amount	1963-	65-	67-	69-	71-	73-	75-	77-	79-	81-	83-	total
5-	1	1										2
10-			1	1	5	1	2	3	3	1		17
15-						2	2	2	1			7
20-								2		2	2	6
25-								1	1		2	4
30-								1	2	2	2	7
35-												
40-								1	1	1		3
45-								1			1	2
50-												
55-												
60-												
65-												
70-												
75-												
80-												
85-												
90-												
95-												
100-									1		1	2
total	1	1	1	1	5	3	4	11	9	6	8	51

Chapter VI

Women and Paid Work.

With the increasing number of women entering the labour force worldwide, more interest has been directed in the literature to the theme of gender biases in the labour market (Barron and Norris 1978; Blaxall 1981; Madden 1985; Larwood 1985). In particular studies of women's role in the labour market by economists have suggested that women are given lower wages because they are less productive and less attached to their work (Blau and Jusenius 1981). This chapter examines the extent to which these explanations are applicable in the case of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is suffering from a great shortage of human resources, and women's participation in the labour force is still very low. This chapter aims to explore patterns of female employment in Saudi Arabia and the different obstacles that hinder Saudi women from responding to the demand for labour power. It examines the ways in which Saudi working women attempt to deal with the contradiction between traditional gender assumptions and contemporary economic conditions. How does this conflict laden situation affect women's opportunities in the labour market?

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part

discusses female jobs, in general, and their distribution in the employment structure. The second part seeks to identify the reasons that push some women to seek a paid employment and examines the degree of Saudi working women's attachment to their jobs in a society where a woman is expected to be nothing but a housewife. It is important to note that when I speak about "working women" I mean women in salaried employment, since most official statistics about working women in Saudi Arabia refer only to women who are seeking work or who are working in salaried jobs. Women's domestic labour or the subsistence production of bedouin and rural women while clearly "work", is not considered so in official enumeration because it does not command income.

Female Education in Saudi Society.

With the increase of wealth in Saudi society and the modernization of the economy, most jobs have become achieved rather than ascribed in Saudi Arabia. Education is now one of the main criteria that determines position in the labour market. Since different educational opportunities lead to different options in the labour force, I first explain how education in Saudi Arabia prepares male and female students for different occupational roles.

The beginning of this century witnessed the establishment of the first formal school for boys in Hejaz. "AlFalāh" (success) schools were the first schools opened in Jeddah and Mecca in 1903. After the unification of the kingdom, a Directorate of Education

was established in Hejaz in 1924. This Directorate was transferred to the Ministry of Education in 1953. The educational system has benefited from a rapid increase in expenditure since 1954, which has permitted a significant increase in the number of students, teachers and schools in Saudi Arabia. In 1954 the number of students was 52,839; by 1967/68 the number had risen to 331,760. In 1977/78 the number had reached 1,219,818 (Abdel Wassa 1983: 27). The number of schools has risen from 453 in 1969/70 to 4,959 in 1982/83. The number of teachers has increased from 4,946 in 1969/70 to 41,947 in 1982/83 (Ministry of Planning 1984/85: 240).

The educational system in Saudi Arabia is based on the principle that the first goal of education is to strengthen Islamic teaching and to prepare students to be "good" Muslims. A large part of the curriculum taught in Saudi schools is devoted to Islamic studies (Ministry of Education 1978: 9). Most of these subjects tend to encourage students to memorize rather than to understand and analyse the main principles of Islam (Al-Yamamah 1986).

Formal female education did not start in Saudi Arabia until the second half of this century. There was a general feeling, among most Saudi men at that time, that women should be educated. An educational gap had begun to appear between Saudi men and women. Many educated men from the first educated generation had married educated non-Saudi women, and many Saudi men felt that female education had become an inevitable requirement in their own society. Newspapers during that period discussed the importance of

female education. But they emphasized that women should have a specific form of education that would enable them to perform their domestic roles properly, and should include knitting, cooking, child-care, and Islamic instruction. They argued that women should not have the same curriculum as men. In their view, women did not need to know "male subjects" and they were concerned that too much knowledge might have negative effects on women's traditional roles as mothers and housewives. A Saudi writer discussed this issue in 1947 as follows:

Anyone who attributes Middle Eastern women's failure to her lack of modern education is making a mistake. Not all modern education is good for women, and it is not a duty for women to be taught. To the contrary, I think that a woman will be a failure if she obtains modern education because she would lose her traditional education. It is enough for a woman to study some of the Islamic teachings, domestic training, health care, home economics and obedient manners to be a successful housewife.... Our houses today are full of these women who are ignorant of the Koran and the Islamic teachings. They are ignorant of the proper modes of socialization.. Children are neglected on the floor or on the doorstep or they are left in servants' hands, who carry them up and down without any tender feeling for their delicate bodies (Jamal 1947).

In 1956, Princess Iffat, king Faisal's wife, took the responsibility of opening the first private school for girls in Jeddah. Four years later in 1960, the Saudi government assumed the responsibility for opening government schools for girls throughout the kingdom. Women's education was a political issue in Saudi Arabia, as it had been in many other Muslim countries such as Turkey and Egypt where the governments felt that women's education was an inevitable necessity to achieve progress (Ahmed 1982).

Introduction of female education was not an easy task for the Saudi government; some "conservative" men in the Najd resented the idea of female education. They thought that education would lead to breakdown in morality and the value system. This resentment was most clearly expressed in the town of Buriedah, where people demonstrated against girl's schools. However, King Faisal was determined to maintain his policy and sent his troops to protect the school. He made it clear that the school would be opened even if no one chose to attend. To encourage people to send their daughters to school and to win the support of the religious authorities, King Faisal put female education under the control of religious authorities while male education was left under the authority of the Ministry of Education (Al Manaa 1982: 96).

The educational system in Saudi Arabia aims to prepare each sex for different roles in the future. The policy of the female educational system made it clear that the first goal of girls' education is to produce housewives.

Girls education aims to bring up a girl according to Islamic teachings, to prepare her to be a good housewife, an ideal wife and a good mother and to prepare her to perform certain jobs that suit her feminine nature such as teaching, nursing, and medical services (The Ministry of Education 1978: 29).

Male and female students have similar curricula; however girls have more domestic subjects such as cooking, knitting, and sewing to prepare them for their future role as mothers and housewives. Girls in state schools are not allowed to study music or physical

education because it is claimed that this would be contrary to the interpretation of Islam in Saudi society. Opposition to female education has gradually lessened and the number of female students has rapidly grown, reaching 11,753 in 1960 and 639,117 in 1981/82 (Abdel Wassa 1983) (See Table VI.1).

The educational system consists of four stages: Elementary for six years, Intermediate for three years, Secondary for three years, and finally University. At the second year of the secondary stage, students have to choose either to study Arts and Human sciences, which means that they will join Arts' colleges, or to study Sciences, which means that they will join Science colleges, at the university stage. Education during the first three stages is free, but not compulsory. Students of both sexes at university are given a grant to finish their education. Most parents do not encourage their daughters to study scientific subjects. In 1981/82, the number of female students who graduated from scientific secondary schools was 97,362, while male science students numbered 176,641. One of the reasons for this phenomenon is that it is assumed that sciences are difficult subjects that do not suit a woman's "nature". However, it is noteworthy that in the last few years, most of the top marks in science secondary schools are scored by women. Also one of the reasons that girls are not encouraged to join science departments at the secondary stage is due to the fact that women's choices of scientific subjects at the university stage are limited in Saudi Arabia. Female science students are restricted at the university stage to studying Medicine, and

Natural Sciences in educational colleges and recently Agriculture. Girls from arts departments have more variety in their choice of study: Arabic, English, History, Geography, Islamic studies, Sociology, and Education. There are no Engineering, Computer Science, Law, Politics, Economics, or Technical courses available for women in Saudi universities.

Despite this sex segregation in the Saudi educational sector which excludes Saudi female students from many of the subjects that men have access to, the educational system gives female students the chance to be in a parallel position to men in separate schools and universities. Female students in Saudi Arabia do not face the same kind of discrimination that most female students face in Western countries in co-educational schools (Byrne 1978; Madsen 1979).

The bulk of Saudi students is concentrated at the elementary stage; 60 per cent of the students in Saudi Arabia are in this stage. Not all female students in Riyadh have the chance to continue to higher levels of education. Women from low-income families are usually obliged to leave school after the elementary stage because it is thought that they have enough schooling and that they should now have more training in domestic work at home. Only 3.6 per cent of female students reach university stage and higher education (Ministry of Education 1981/82: 75). Male students outnumber female students by far. Table VI.2 shows that in 1981/82 male students numbered 519,377, while female students numbered 332,776 at the Elementary stage. In higher education

there were 31,512 male students and 16,321 female students. Male students receive more encouragement to finish higher education than girls. As mentioned in the last chapter, many Saudi men still prefer to marry women who are less educated than they, so that many Saudi families do not encourage their daughters to finish their higher education before marriage, fearing that girls' chances for marriage might be reduced. On the other hand, it is very common to find female students who are married and have children at Saudi universities. Women's chances of finishing higher education are more limited today than during the early phase of the liberalisation in the Arab countries in the 1960s; greater restrictions are placed on women's opportunities for obtaining scholarships in present-day Saudi society. In 1964 King Faisal gave women the right to have government scholarships To study abroad. From 1970, however, a Saudi woman was no longer entitled to hold an overseas scholarship without being accompanied by a male companion from her male "mahram" such as father or brother. In 1978 female scholarships to study overseas were entirely restricted. Even with the availability of a male companion, women are not entitled to have governmental scholarships to study abroad. The only explanation proposed for this decision is that the government is more concerned about the women's safety than are their own parents. It is said that many male mahram tend to go back to Saudi Arabia, leaving the women in their charge behind alone. For example, in 1986, only 21 (0.02 %) female students had scholarships through the Saudi Educational Office in Britain, while there were 815 male

students. Most of those 21 women holding scholarships had secured the permission before the decision was announced.

One of the significant educational problems in Saudi Arabia today is the unbalanced distribution of university graduates. Most Saudi students are concentrated in Arts and Social Sciences, while fewer students are enrolled in Sciences. For example, 41.5 per cent of female students graduated from Arts colleges. Only 7.8 graduated from Natural Sciences (See, Table VI.3.) Some officials argue that the reason for this problem is the lack of planning of Saudi educational policy. They emphasize that the educational system should direct students to study certain subjects that fulfill "development" goals. Al Kashmeri blames the educational system for hindering development programmes in Saudi Arabia because it encourages students to enroll in Arts and Social Sciences rather than in Sciences.

If the country is in a desperate need for technical and professional workers in agriculture, industry, medicine and road construction and yet the university produces graduates in language, religious subjects like *Fiqh*, history, art and law, this does not only mean that the university system is insufficient, but it also means that it will put an extra load on development by increasing the shortage of technical professions on the one hand, and by increasing unemployed students in social sciences on the other (Al Kashmeri 1985: 119).

To solve this problem, he suggests opening more training colleges for men in agriculture, industry and technology. It is interesting to mention that when most educationalists talk about solutions, they discuss them from a male point of view. Nobody

ever bothers to suggest opening technical colleges for women. Women are not considered a significant part of the human resources of the Kingdom. Thus, one could say that if the male educational system is suffering from unbalanced planning, it could also be said that the female educational system not only suffers from unbalanced planning but from unequal opportunities as well. There is no doubt that these differential educational provisions have affected women's opportunities in the labour market in Saudi Arabia, as we will see. Nonetheless it is wrong to assume that the educational system is solely responsible for creating such a problem in Saudi Arabia. Education in any country reflects the ideology, the value system and the policies of that country and plays a crucial role in reproducing the social formation of that society.

However, it is also important to mention that although the educational system in Saudi Arabia is a reflection of the ideology of the society, it is also an important factor in the transformation of Saudi society. Education has widened women's knowledge and made them aware of their rights; it also gives women the chance to seek paid jobs. Thus, it is inevitable that education should create a conflict between women's attitudes and society's attitudes towards them. On the one hand, 'traditional' values and norms still insist that a woman's primary role in life is to be a mother and housewife; on the other, educated women feel that they have the right to make their own decisions and to seek a paid job. Thus educated women feel psychological constraints while

trying to make the balance between what they would like to be, and what is expected of them. Also, "development" planners find themselves faced with a difficult choice of either pressing forward with modernization or adhering to "traditional" values and their narrow interpretation of Islam. In some affairs such as business and financial matters they follow the modernistic approach. With regard to women's education and employment, they try to achieve a balance between "traditionalism" and modernity by encouraging women to work in certain jobs that are assumed to suit their "nature", provided segregation from men can be maintained.

Suitable Jobs for Women

Female employment is a controversial issue in Saudi society today. Three groups can be distinguished in regard to their differing attitudes to women's work. The traditionalists argue that women's work is her domestic work. Women are born to be mothers and housewives, and nothing else. This group believes that women should be confined to their homes. They should not seek paid jobs as men do. They feel threatened by the idea of female employment. For them, female employment is responsible for many of the problems of society.

The second group believes that women can work but that they should be restricted to certain jobs that suit their "feminine nature". Women can work as teachers, doctors and social workers, but they should not work in the full range of male occupations.

The third group are the modernists. They argue that Saudi Arabia is suffering from a great shortage of human resources, and since women have the same talents as men, women should have the same responsibility as men to develop their country. This group believes that "development" cannot be achieved as long as women, 50 per cent of the population, are not utilized. Women should participate fully in the labour force. All Saudi citizens, whether male or female, should have the same rights and duties. Sex should never be an obstacle to women's contribution to the progress of Saudi society.

In my view, women's work is not welcomed by most people in Saudi society for several reasons. Saudi norms and values insist that women should be confined to their homes. Female employment is thought to cause destruction of the sexual division of labour in the family. Since women are expected to be financially dependent on their husbands, women's financial independence is regarded, by some Saudi men, as a threat to their authority in the family. Finally, some Saudi men feel afraid that women's work may gradually lead to desegregation between sexes which is considered immoral and against Islamic teachings as understood in Saudi society.

Women's own conceptions of suitable jobs are greatly affected by the general ideology of Saudi society as a whole. Most women interviewed (34 out of 50) emphasized that the suitable jobs for a woman are the jobs that accord with her 'natural' characteristics and abilities. A female doctor said:

I think women can work in medicine, nursing, teaching and

social work. I don't support the idea of women working as pilots or engineers or soldiers or miners or road constructors. A woman should protect her femininity. She should not work in any work that would harm her womanhood or expose her to leaving her home at night.

Some women interviewed argued that since women are delicate, they should work in certain jobs that reflect their "femininity". This point of view is represented in a headmistress's words:

Women can do the easy physical jobs such as teaching, computing, accounting and nursing. These jobs are considered an extension of women's role in the family. Women are physically, but not intellectually, weak. Thus, they should leave the hard jobs to men.

Other women interviewed referred the limitations of women's jobs to customs and traditions. They emphasize that women cannot work in all jobs as men do because it is socially unacceptable. Sex segregation rules and Saudi customs determine the appropriate jobs for women. A social worker said:

I think our customs and traditions do not encourage women to mingle with men. Thus, I think the most suitable jobs for women are teaching, nursing and social work. However, I don't think these customs emerge from Islam. Islam does not prevent women from mingling with men, providing they are modest in their dress.

Some working women confused the natural with the social in their discussions of women's "innate" capacities. For example, a nurse said:

I cannot imagine a woman's nature can enable her to work as an engineer or a mechanic. It is difficult for a woman

to work in such jobs because our traditions do not accept these jobs for women. Since I have never seen a Saudi woman work in such jobs, I don't think a Saudi woman can ever do it.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the more women are exposed to other cultures and the higher their educational level, the more they are liable to separate the natural from the social in their attitudes towards women's jobs. 16 out of 30 respondents who have at least a university first degree, believe that if women are given the same opportunities as men, they can do all men's jobs at least as well or better. A private businesswoman said:

Women can work in all the jobs that men do if they are brought up socially to do so. See how in Western countries women can work in different jobs and prove their capacities. In our society, women feel that they can do nothing except teaching.

Saudi Women Enter the Waged Labour Force

Women's work is not a new phenomenon in Saudi Arabia. As I have mentioned before, women in pre-oil Saudi society used to work very hard, even harder than many working women in contemporary Saudi society. However, their contribution was not considered to be "work" because it was not paid. It is worth noting that most statistics about women in developing countries like Saudi Arabia are inaccurate. Most of these data do not count rural and bedouin women working for their families or market women as workers (Boulding 1983: 288). The increase of wealth has encouraged the

Saudi government to open more schools for men and women, and education has enabled women to seek paid jobs. Thus, the employment of educated women is a new phenomenon. The first pioneer women to enter the salaried labour force were from the wealthy and well-to-do families who had the chance to study abroad; economic need was not the main reason for those women to seek paid jobs.

Female participation in the salaried labour market started with the expansion of female education in 1960. The Saudi government at that time was facing a series of financial and political problems which created pressures for greater liberalization in Saudi society. These problems included the Aramco workers' strikes in 1953 and 1956, the severe financial crises in 1957/58, the liberal princes' demand for a limited monarchy in 1960, the rise of Arab nationalism and its attacks on the Saudi regime from outside (Lackner 1978: 52-69). King Faisal, who was the prime minister at that time, announced the Ten-Point Reform Programme to save the monarchy in 1960, which aimed to improve the social and economic conditions of all citizens by regulating economic and commercial activities and gave more space for democratic developments. In the same year, a group of educated women, who had had the chance to study in other Arab countries, started to talk publicly in the press about the lower status of Saudi women at that time compared to the situation in the early Islamic period. They emphasized the need for change, and King Faisal grasped the chance to "prove" his support for change. He encouraged women to work and gave them equal salaries for two

reasons. First, the country had a desperate need for women to fill jobs usually undertaken by foreign female workers. Second, giving women equal salaries to men demonstrated his commitment to the liberalization programme and helped to defuse political pressures within the country (Shaker 1972).

The religious authorities severely objected to these women's demands. However, King Faisal held a meeting with members of this authority and convinced them of the significance of the new change for the country. It is worthy of mentioning that although the government tended to display conservative attitudes towards women in its public statements, most women's demands were answered. The years from 1962-1964 witnessed a significant increase in the number of women's jobs. King Faisal's support for the women's movement was one of the important elements that changed the "image" of Saudi society in other countries and reduced the tensions and opposition against the Saudi regime.

In order to challenge the remaining outside attacks on his regime, Faisal purposely invited a group of journalists from the Arab Middle East to visit Saudi Arabia and witness for themselves the "progressive" trends of his government. Of course, no other example would have served the purpose better than the "changing role of women" in Saudi Arabia (Shaker 1972: 246).

Women and Labour Legislation in Saudi Arabia

According to Saudi labour legislation, male and female workers are entitled to have the same salary for doing the same job. Salary levels are to be determined according to

qualification, not according to sex. Male and female workers are entitled to have the same vacations. Women are entitled to have eight weeks maternity leave, and four months and ten days *idda* following the death of their husbands. *Idda* in Arabic means "counting"; according to Islamic teachings women should "count" a certain period in the case of the death or her divorce from her husband during which time she cannot marry to be sure that she is not pregnant. *Iddah* aims to ensure the right of inheritance to the child. (Al Hariry 1939: 513). According to Saudi tradition, women should not leave their homes during this period, except in case of necessity.

It is important to mention that officially Saudi women do not need to have a permission from her husband or her guardian to seek a paid work. But because of sex segregation rules it is the husband or the guardian who applies for her to work.

Women are not allowed to work in any job that exposes them to contact with men. The only jobs in which women deal directly with men while unveiled are in the health services and on Saudi radio and television. It is interesting to note the contradictory situation in Saudi society that while mass-media programmes emphasize the risk of desegregation, Saudi T.V screens films and series from other countries where mingling between the sexes is prevalent, and Saudi T.V and Radio itself employs female broadcasting staff. The only company that allows women to mix with men is Aramco. Finally, women are not allowed to work in any work that is thought to be harmful or to not suit

their "nature" (Khafaja 1981). Although labour legislation does not directly prohibit women from such work, it establishes significant restrictions that hinder them from working in private companies, factories, international institutions and embassies.

Sexual Segregation in the Labour Force

Working women constitute a small proportion of the labour force in Saudi Arabia; only 5.1 per cent of women of working age participate in the labour force. Almost 60 per cent of the labour force are non-Saudi. The great majority of working women are working in the government employmnet.

Because of rules of sex segregation in Saudi society, all female schools at the different stages of education are staffed by women. Even at the university stage, most subjects studied by women are taught by female teachers. In a few cases where female teachers are not available, they are taught through closed circuit television.

With the increase of schools and universities in Saudi Arabia, the number of Saudi working women in the civil service has dramatically increased. While there were 148 female

teachers in 1960/61 (Abdel Wassa 1983: 78), this number had risen to 41,947 in 1982/83 (see Table VI.9). Most women in the civil service go into white collar jobs such as teaching, secretarial, administrative and clerical jobs (see Table VI.6). Women with university degrees constitute the largest part of female employment of the civil service. Table VI.5 shows that while 1,426 jobs were offered to women with university degrees by the civil service in 1983, only 325 jobs were offered to women holding less than university level qualifications.

Educational Sector: it is estimated that 89.3 per cent of women working in the female civil service are employed in the educational sector under the General Presidency of Girls' Education. All senior employees of this government agency are men.

The majority of working women in the educational sector are concentrated in the elementary stage and in adult education. In 1985 the number of female teachers at these two stages was 22,788 (see Table VI.7). These two stages are self sufficient in that they are 100 per cent Saudi. The intermediate and the secondary stages are still in need of Saudi women; only 50 per cent of the female teachers at these stages are Saudi. The restrictions on governmental scholarships for women make the numbers of Saudi female teachers at the university stage very limited. Only a few of the teachers at Saudi colleges and universities are Saudi.

With the increasing number of educated women, Saudi women have

started to hold most of the female jobs in the educational sector from dean to clerk. Nonetheless, all important decisions are taken by men. Women's role is limited entirely to carrying out orders. Women as teachers and administrators have little power in decisions concerning policy and financial matters. Working women in senior jobs have rarely had any role in decision-making. One of my respondents expressed her opinion of women's work as follows:

Work in our society is absolutely dominated by men. However, men know nothing about what is happening in female jobs. We (women) are like a puppet show in men's hands. The first and the final decisions are taken by men.

The Health Sector: 7.3 per cent of female workers in the civil service are in the Ministry of Health as doctors, nurses, midwives, and social workers. There are no official statistics about the number of female doctors in Saudi hospitals. Judging from the hospitals I have visited, the number seems to be very low. Al-Husseini (1983) indicated that the number of all Saudi female officials in the Ministries of Health and Defence is 512 workers. Female doctors have no say in decision-making in the hospitals they are working in. There is no female doctor who occupies an executive position in any Saudi hospital because that would mean that they would be in a senior position to men, and this is against the policy of these hospitals.

The first nursing school in Riyadh was opened in 1973. There were seven nursing schools in Saudi Arabia in 1983. But the rate of increase of this sector is still very low. The number of women who

graduated from these schools was only 605 from 1973 to 1983 (see Table VI.11).

Since employment in the health services exposes women to contact with men, many families do not allow their daughters to work in such a field. The number of female doctors, nurses and social workers is still very low in comparison to non-Saudi women. Hospitals are suffering from a great shortage of Saudi female nurses. The majority of nurses are foreigners from the Philippines, Korea and other Arab countries. The head of the female nursing staff in Central Riyadh hospital, which is one of the biggest hospitals in Saudi Arabia, reported to me that, of the 1,057 female nurses in the hospital, only 16 were Saudi in 1985. She emphasizes that most Saudi women are still reluctant to work in nursing. It is noteworthy that people's attitudes towards the importance of securing a "modest job" plays an important role in directing women in their choice of employment. According to Saudi culture, a modest job for a woman is the job that does not expose her to male contact. People always look upon desegregated jobs with suspicion. So, even when the government proclaims its need for female doctors and nurses, no effort is made to change people's attitudes towards these jobs. On the contrary, the mass-media always emphasizes the dangers and risks that the society might face from the desegregation of jobs.

Both female doctors and female nurses face difficulties in working in these desegregated jobs. Female doctors face two kinds of problems: problems with their colleagues and problems with male

patients. Some female doctors stressed that most male colleagues cannot accept the fact that women are equal to them at work. Saudi men may accept foreign female doctors, particularly Western ones, but not Saudi women. They emphasize that although mixing with men is better, it is harder for women. Working with men places women in direct competition with men. The competence of male doctors is taken for granted, but female doctors have to work very hard to win people's confidence. When a male doctor makes a mistake, his colleagues try to support him; men follow the principle of, "You help me today and I'll help you tomorrow". If a female doctor makes the same mistake, she is aggressively blamed. A female doctor said:

Female doctors in our society are expected to work as hard or even harder than men to get people's trust. Male colleagues work less but nobody challenges them. People and male colleagues assume that because a female doctor has domestic responsibilities, her work must be less than male doctor. A woman doctor is not as good as a man. These attitudes make women work very hard to gain people's respect and trust. Male colleagues are not only competing with women they are treating them with enmity. They do their best to keep female colleagues in a subordinated position.

Also, female doctors face some difficulties while dealing with male patients who are not used to seeing women working in such a context. Thus, it needs time, effort and patience to make those patients accept the fact that women doctors are as capable at their work as their male colleagues.

Nursing is a job which is not appreciated in Saudi society. Most Saudi people still look upon nursing as a domestic job and do

not realize its great importance in the health service. Thus many Saudis look down on this job and do not allow their daughters or wives to take it up. Many Saudi nurses spoke of the various difficulties they face because of people's demeaning attitudes. Beside the negative attitudes towards nursing, nurses face another problem in their work. Because a few female nurses complained about having to deal with male patients, the "Committee of Encouragement of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" sent an official letter to all hospitals under the authority of the Ministry of Health asking them not to let any Saudi nurses work in male departments. Thus, almost all female nurses in the general hospitals, except in maternity hospitals, are working in outpatient clinics. Many nurses I interviewed emphasized that although working in clinics is easier, this policy has deprived them of the great experience they used to gain from working in different departments. Now most Saudi nurses are concentrated in clerical or first aid jobs. It is clear that such a decision does not treat Saudi female nurses as an important part of the health service. It tries to solve the problem of some nurses in the short run and ignores the consequences of such a decision for the health service as a whole in the long run. When oil revenues decline and Saudi hospitals are no longer able to hire foreign nurses, who will fill the gap in Saudi hospitals?

Social Services: The third sector that employs women in Saudi Arabia is social services. Saudi women began working in this sector in the 1960s but still not many Saudi women are employed in

such jobs because most of these jobs involve two shifts. Some social services require the female social worker to deal with the families of the clients, including their male kin, or to make visits to their homes. Thus many Saudi families do not encourage their daughters to work in such a job. Saudi women who are working in this sector constitute 0.8 per cent of working women in the civil service (see Table VI.7). The female role in this sector is still limited, and they do not have any word in decision-making concerning social welfare policy.

Banking and Trading Sector: One of the new jobs recently opened to women is banking. With the increasing number of women seeking paid employment, women's economic power has been recognized. The first bank for women was launched in Riyadh in 1980. In the following years, American and British banks opened new branches for women in Riyadh and Jeddah. Saudi women and foreigners have been trained to run these banks. It was estimated that 72 Saudi women were working in this sector in 1983 (Al-Hussini 1983: 78).

Petty trading is one of the jobs that Saudi women used to practise in pre-oil Saudi society. But they did not work in large scale business, and they used to trade through their husbands. Since the influx of oil wealth in Saudi Arabia, some women from wealthy families have had the chance to work in private trading concerns. It is estimated that one per cent of those registered at the Ministry of Trade in Riyadh are women, who thereby have official permission to practise trading.

However, because of sex segregation rules, women are not given the chance to carry out such work independently. There are several restrictions that hinder businesswomen from practising the work themselves. First, a businesswoman's signature is not accepted as legally binding by the Ministry of Trade. Thus women need to have an authorized representative or *wakil* whose signature is officially accepted to carry out the work for her (Al Zamel 1984). The *wakil* has the power to sell, buy, rent and perform all other commercial activities for women. Such legislation puts businesswomen at the mercy of men, and does not enable them to undertake the work by themselves. Businesswomen I interviewed gave various examples of women who were cheated by their *wakil*. Second, the activities of businesswomen are supervised by "The Authority of Encouragement of Virtue and Prevention of Vice". Since the interpretation of Islam varies from one Muslim to another, some conservative members of this institution put obstacles in the way of businesswomen which make it difficult for them to carry out the work themselves. Businessmen, on the other hand, are under the supervision of the Ministry of Trade only. Third, businesswomen are not allowed to sell in their own shops, because this might expose them to dealing with men. So, even if a woman owns a shop which sells women's clothes, she cannot stand in the shop to serve women customers. She has to employ a man to sell for her. Recently, a female shopping center was opened in Riyadh where all shop assistants and workers are women. But still most shops and shopping centres in Riyadh are staffed by men, and women

must deal with them veiled.

Being a businesswoman is one of the most difficult jobs in Saudi society, particularly if a woman decides to take the responsibility of travelling abroad to buy goods and of dealing with male traders in the market. Some Saudi traders find it difficult to accept the fact that a woman is breaking the values of the society and entering a face-to-face situation in a man's world. Businesswomen I interviewed gave different examples of the problems they face in their work. One indicated that her father was strongly opposed to her business because her work requires her to deal directly with men. For him, as for many other Saudi people, this job makes her lose her femininity. As I have mentioned in Chapter Five, according to Saudi values and norms, a woman should be shy and delicate in her behaviour but, as a businesswoman in a "conservative" society like Saudi Arabia, she has to be serious in her appearance and behaviour to win male traders' respect. Thus it is thought that her job makes her look and behave like a "man". It is against the "traditional" image of a woman. Another businesswoman explains the difficulties she has faced in carrying out her job:

When I went to rent a shop for my boutique, the owner of the shop was shocked to find a woman wanted to rent it. While we were discussing the contract some men came in, and I felt the man was very embarrassed by me being there. I face another difficulty of winning men traders' respect. Because Saudi men used to treat women as a sexual object, I try hard to hide any signs of femininity in my appearance and behaviour. I put on a very modest dress with long sleeves and deal with them very formally. I don't like them to look upon me as a woman but as a colleague. It took me a long time to win their respect. I

remember when I first started my business I had to deal with some bedouin traders. One of these traders was very conservative and he did not like to deal with women unveiled. Thus, he used to turn his face away while talking to me. After a while, when he realized that I was serious in my work and I respected myself, he began to talk to me with great respect.

Opportunities for Men and Women in the Labour Force

As we have seen, the differences between the occupational distribution of the two sexes are quite apparent in Saudi Arabia. The jobs that are offered to women in the civil service are far fewer than those offered to men. Education and influence are the main factors that determine a woman's position in the labour market. Because men have more access to government offices, men's influence plays an important role in determining a woman's position. Table VI.11 provides a good illustration of the significant differences between male and female opportunities in the labour market. Men's opportunities for promotion are also wider than those of women. In 1983, 3,135 competitions for promotions were offered to men, while 763 only were offered to women.

Women are represented only in clerical and service jobs, whereas men are more likely to be in administrative, technical, and "special" jobs. There is also a substantial hierarchical difference between the sexes in the labour market. Women occupy a small proportion of high ranking jobs. Most executive positions, even those supervising female workers are held by men.

Although in legal terms men and women are entitled to have the same salaries for the same tasks, promotions and increases give men more chances to have better salaries than women. Table VI.13 shows that most female officials in public institutions get lower salaries than men. For the majority of female officials (246 out of 351) their monthly salaries range between S.R.2,000 to 5,685. While 3,311 male officials make more than S.R.8,336, only 7 (0.2%) female officials earn that salary.

My data show that the husbands of 36 out of 50 respondents have higher salaries than their wives. This can be attributed to several different factors. Men have access to a greater variety of jobs - men can work in private companies, in private business and in the military where they have more chance to get better salaries. Nine of my respondents' husbands work in private business, and six work in military jobs where they are well paid. Also men have more chance to finish their higher education than women. While two of my respondents have Ph.D degrees, five of their husbands have this degree. Also, as we have seen, men have more chance for promotion than women. It is important to mention that men with less than a university degree have more chance to find a job than women with lower education. There are three cases where respondents' husbands do not have any educational qualifications except basic literacy but nevertheless they occupy good positions and have better salaries than their wives (see Table VI.14).

Twelve out of my fifty respondents have higher salaries than their husbands'. Of those, ten are teachers. As I have mentioned

before, teachers are given a 30 per cent salary premium for teaching, which makes their salaries better than other officials who have the same degree but work in administrative tasks. The other two are businesswomen. There are only two cases out of fifty where both husband and wife have equal salaries. Since the supply of Saudi women in the labour market is greater than demand, some Saudi women are obliged to accept jobs requiring lower qualifications than those they hold so as to be able to work. This means, of course, that they receive lower salaries than they should. For example, a female university graduate should work on Grade 6 in the occupational hierarchy but if there is no job available on that grade, a woman will accept work below that grade. One of my respondents has an M.A. degree. Officially, she should be appointed on Grade 8 but the shortage of female jobs made her accept to work at Grade 6. Men are rarely employed in jobs below their appropriate qualification grade.

Vocational training inside and outside the country is almost entirely restricted to men. Women are not given vocational training abroad to improve their work skills because of the restrictions on travel without male *mahram* as already mentioned. Also, women are not given any training inside the country because it is said that there is no replacement for them in their work place.

The working women that I interviewed also argued that men work in better conditions than women. Male universities and offices are better furnished and better air-conditioned than women's offices.

It is noticeable that the more women are educated, the more they feel frustrated in their jobs. Although Saudi society is in desperate need of educated women, particularly those holding Ph.D. degrees, some Saudi women Ph.Ds resign or are not given the chance to work. Some of these women are working in other Arab countries. Shaker (1972) has indicated that since developing countries encourage secular education for the sake of staffing public offices, without providing suitable conditions to respond to the consequences of secular education, education becomes a source of frustration to the educated elite in developing countries. This point of view is very apparent among educated women in Saudi Arabia. Many elite women interviewed expressed their extreme frustration in their work. Being educated makes women more aware of their rights and duties. However, society still insists on placing them in a secondary position to men. Most studies of working women both in developed and developing countries emphasize that, regardless of the type of work or the type of organization involved, women's employment is characterized by limited power over their work (Boserup 1970; Pollert 1981; Westwood 1984).

It is noteworthy that occupational segregation has not declined despite the increasing number of women entering the labour force. Although in the 1960's the Saudi government displayed a conservative attitude towards women in public pronouncements, during that period women were nonetheless encouraged to work and were given a variety of jobs. Nowadays, although planners tend to emphasize in public statements that women's work is essential for

the country's progress, women's chances for work have become more limited now than ten years ago. Women with lower education were pushed out of the labour force and, in the last few years. Since 1982 many female university graduates have started to suffer from unemployment (Al Dekhail 1983). This point will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

It is also evident that although male officials tend to declare that Saudi Arabia is in desperate need of women's work, few efforts have been made to encourage women to work in industrial or technical jobs. Instead, the Fourth Development Plan declares that they are trying to find new jobs for women that will not require them to leave their homes.

Recent developments in computer applications in other countries have increased the possibilities for women's participation without their leaving home. As the level of computerization in the kingdom increases, more such job opportunities will become available (The Fourth Development Plan 1985-1990: 52)

The Fourth Development Plan emphasizes that one of the great challenges of employing women in Saudi Arabia is to find suitable jobs for the increasing number of female university graduates which would conform to Islamic teachings.

The challenge, first manifesting itself in the Fourth Plan, lies in finding ways to utilize effectively the knowledge and skills of this segment of the population in accordance with the Shria (The Fourth Development Plan 1985-1990: 51).

Female Unemployment

Despite the shortage of human resources discussed above, there is an increasing degree of female unemployment. By unemployed I mean a person who is actively seeking work and cannot find it. This phenomenon first started almost seven years ago among women with intermediate levels of educational qualifications, but it was not noticed since it mainly affected women from poor families. I would like to mention that there is no official data about this problem among women with intermediate degrees, but it came to my notice through my contact with female charitable associations who had many offers of women seeking paid jobs there because they could not get jobs in the civil service. A few years later it started to affect female university graduates. The head of the Female Civil Service has stated that female unemployment began to appear in 1982 (Al Dukhail 1983). The number of unemployed university trained women was 490 in 1984. With the spread of female colleges and universities, on the one hand, and the limitation of female jobs on the other, the number of unemployed women is increasing. It is expected that 50,000 female university graduates will be unemployed in 1990 (Times 1985).

The head of the civil service in Saudi Arabia attributes female unemployment to several factors including the limitations on female jobs, "women's nature" and social restrictions on women's movements (Al Yamamah 1984). Some Saudi officials attribute the problem to the failure of the educational system to meet demands of "development". In my view, different factors combine together to

create this problem:

1- The cultural assumption that women are responsible for bearing and rearing of children, has led to the neglect of the importance of women as a source of labour.

2- Moving toward industrialization puts restrictions on women's involvement in the labour force. According to Saudi ideology, industrial jobs are not suitable for women.

3-The policy of restriction on women's movements means that women are not allowed to drive their own cars, and it is not socially acceptable for Saudi women to use public transportation such as buses or taxis. Thus Saudi women are always at the mercy of their kinsmen to drive them to their work.

4- Women's subject options in higher education are limited and do not enable them to work in certain types of jobs.

5- In the same way, only certain jobs are defined as suitable for women in Saudi society. Women are thus restricted to teaching, administration and clerical jobs.

6- The popularity of Wahabi teachings which assume that women should be veiled and secluded, makes many Saudi men refuse to let their daughters work in desegregated jobs.

7- The growth of oil wealth in Saudi Arabia has enabled the Saudi government and private companies to employ expensive foreign workers and restrict Saudi women to certain jobs. Women's work is considered marginal to the Saudi economy today.

Instead of offering more full-time jobs for women, the increased use of part-time jobs to solve the problem of female

unemployment has been suggested in the press by some officials. They argue that since married women have two roles to perform, it is better for them to take a part-time job and thus give a chance to a greater number of women to be employed (Al Belad 1985).

Women's Motivation to Work

The influx of wealth into Saudi Arabia has raised the standard of living of most Saudi families, and many Saudi men can now afford to maintain their families on their salaries alone. For many families, women's work is no longer considered to be essential as it used to be. Thus, Saudi women have been encouraged to be secluded. However, with the spread of education many women have started coming out of their seclusion. Many factors and forces have contributed to increasing the number of women in the labour force. Unlike most women in Western countries who work for financial reasons (Griffiths 1976; Buvinic 1983; Davanzo & Pohlee 1983), many Saudi women work for personal achievement, intellectual satisfaction, avoidance of boredom and loneliness, and to mix with other women.

As I mentioned in the last chapter, the availability of foreign domestic help, the restrictions on women's movements, the lack of public leisure activities for women, and the breakdown of the extended family system have caused many Saudi housewives to suffer from boredom and isolation at home. However, education has opened up a new option for Saudi women. Educated women feel that

there are new areas through which to express their identities. Saudi women look upon work as their only escape from familial and social restrictions. Many Saudi women feel that work has become the main window that they can look through to the outside world. They emphasize that work gives them self confidence. A university teacher emphasized the importance of work to her as follows:

My work is very important to me; it is a necessity of life like food and drink. I cannot imagine that I could live without it. Work enables me to improve my self esteem, to feel that I am valuable, and that I can produce something valuable.

A headmistress indicated what work meant to her:

Work is my whole life. I cannot live without working. Work gives me the chance to develop my personality. It makes me more mature. Work gives me the chance to mix with other people and benefit from their experience. Work teaches me how to deal with different situations. It is true that financial need is not the main reason for me seeking a paid job, but I cannot deny that it encourages me to work because I feel that I am producing something valuable.

My data show that education is the primary factor that has encouraged my informants to go to work. Before female education, women had no other choice than to be a mother and a housewife. Education gives women more options in their lives. Thus, although the Saudi educational system aims to prepare women to be housewives, it enables women to seek paid jobs. In other words, one can say that the influx of wealth which first had the effect of increasing female seclusion, is the same factor that pushes women

to go back to work today.

Twenty out of fifty women interviewed mentioned education first as their reason for seeking a paid job. For them, being educated had automatically led to their employment. The higher their level of education, the more women are anxious to work. Most respondents believe that education is useless if a woman does not work. They used to repeat that a certificate is not obtained just to be hung in the kitchen but to be benefited from in developing the country and increasing family income.

Economic need is the second most commonly cited factor that pushes women to seek a paid job. Although, the increase in wealth has enabled many Saudi families to live on husbands' salaries only, the competition for consumption in Saudi society has encouraged many women from well-to-do families to seek a paid job. Fifteen out of fifty respondents claimed that economic necessity was the primary reason for them going to work. Their family's income was not sufficient before they began working. All these respondents were driven to work at an early age before finishing their education. Most nurses interviewed emphasized that they chose nursing, despite its social unacceptability in Saudi society, because the salary was good. A nurse said:

Work is very important to me financially. If I were not working, nobody would knock on the door and give me a penny. I have to work to support my mother and my children.

Another nurse emphasized the financial importance of her work as follows:

Work for me is not a matter of wasting time. A married woman who has children does not have spare time. I work because I do not want my children to feel the need I felt. When I was young, my mother separated from my father and she could not find a job to support us because she had no education. We were in desperate need of money. Thus, I decided to work to feel secure, to make my children lead a better life than mine. Work enables me to be financially independent and to support my family and natal family. Work for me is a matter of life.

It is worth noting that it was not only women with low family incomes who mentioned the importance of the economic factor; women from well-to-do families have mentioned it as well. Twenty-seven respondents out of fifty were working before marriage and they had got used to being financially independent. They found it difficult to leave their work when they got married and ask their husbands to support them. Some respondents claimed that although their husbands' incomes were good, they were still not enough to provide all their family needs including sending their children to good private schools, having a nice house with modern furniture, spending a holiday abroad, possessing elegant clothes, having nice cars, employing domestic help, and buying jewellery. Thus, it is clear that the word "need" is relative; what is considered a "need" in one family is considered secondary in another. The present increase in the standard of living and growing incentives to consumption have transformed "luxuries" into necessities and made domestic commodities become indicators of family "status". This idea is expressed in a doctor's words:

The financial factor is very important to me. I like to

lead a comfortable life. I like to give my son everything he needs. Work makes me feel secure. If God forbid *la-samaha Allah* my husband lost his job, my work will be the second income of the family and I always try to keep some money for the future.

Fourteen respondents stated that they go to work to overcome boredom and loneliness. With the lack of women's public leisure activities or social groups where women can meet each other, many Saudi women feel that work is the most acceptable excuse for them to leave their homes and meet other women. A teacher expressed this idea as follows:

Work is one way of wasting my time. Before working, I was isolated in my home. I did not meet any people, except my family or my family-in-law. Now I have the chance to meet other people. But still work is not very important to me. If my husband asked me to resign, I would resign, or if my domestic servant goes back to her country, I will leave my job. But as long as my conditions enable me to work, I will keep on working.

Education in itself makes women get used to going out every day; going out to school has become part of their daily routine. After finishing their studies, some women find it difficult to stay at home all day. Work has become a habit for them. It is interesting to mention that there are some working women who are not satisfied with their work and are not attached to their jobs but who still keep on working because they are used to going out every day. Nine respondents claimed that they kept on working because they were not used to sitting at home.

Finally, I would like to indicate that pursuing a career has

rarely been a motivation for Saudi women to seek paid work. The concept of "career" does not exist in Saudi society. According to Saudi ideology, a woman's career is her family and children. Career women are always regarded as selfish and neglectful women. Only one respondent mentioned that having a career was her first motivation to work. This respondent was brought up in a Western society and is affected by Western attitudes.

The Factors that Women Consider in Choosing their Jobs

Studies of women's work have identified various factors that affect the decision to take a job such as choosing a job compatible with domestic responsibilities (Bunster 1983), the salary she may expect in regard to the price of available domestic replacement (Davanzo and Pohlee 1983), the husband's attitudes towards his wife's job, the economic requirements of the family and the number and age of children (Nieva 1985). My data indicate that there are several factors affecting Saudi women's choice of work. Because many Saudi women do not work out of desperate need, an interest in the work itself was the most frequent reason given by my informants as the basis for their decision to go to work. Seventeen out of fifty respondents claimed that their interest in the work encouraged them to apply for the job. Sixteen respondents indicated that

they chose their jobs because they had no other option. Most female university graduates are expected to be teachers.

A key factor affecting women's choice of work is working hours. Many women interviewed claimed that the shorter their working day, the easier it is for them to combine their double day as paid workers and housewives. In this connection, my data show that teaching is one of the favourite jobs available to Saudi women. Its working hours are relatively short (from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.), they have 30 per cent extra salary as a "teaching allowance", and they are entitled to two months holiday in summer, while most government institutions have one month only.

A woman's qualification, her subject of study and her level of education also affect her choice of a job. Some respondents such as doctors, nurses and social workers argued that education determined their job choice. Salary is also an important point that women consider, but it is not the first thing that most Saudi women look at in this connexion. Only six respondents mentioned that salary was the first thing they considered in choosing their jobs. However, with the decrease of oil prices in the last two years, a woman's salary has become more essential to a Saudi family than before.

Three respondents claimed that they were not the ones who chose their jobs. The women's civil service directed them to their employment according to the available jobs in the labour market. Three respondents chose their jobs because of its location near their homes or near their husbands' jobs. Only two respondents

said that their families chose the work for them.

It is worth mentioning that one of the significant, if only implicit, factors that Saudi women consider in choosing their jobs is the relative prestige associated with the job. Women tend to choose jobs which are compatible and consistent with the status of their husbands or male kin. Since men are usually assumed to be the head of their families, all members of the family are ascribed his status as well. So if a woman decides to enter the labour market, she usually occupies the job which corresponds with her husband's status. For example, if a man occupies a good position and his wife's qualifications do not enable her to find a good job which is compatible with her husband's job, she would rather withdraw from the labour market or work in unpaid charitable jobs than to work in a job which is considered demeaning to family status. That is why most working women I interviewed who occupied good positions also had husbands or fathers who had good positions. Thus, there is a kind of balance between husband's and wife's positions. Male kin's position play an important role in helping their womenfolk to get better jobs.

Women's Attachment to their Work

A frequent explanation given by many economists to account for women's inequality in the labour market is that, because women are still the primary caretakers of children, they do not take their work as seriously as men do. Women's family orientation is said to

discourage them from utilizing their own skills. It is claimed that women tend to have higher job turnover rates than men and that they are less productive and their attachment to their work is weak (Kessler-Harris 1985; Blaxall 1981). However, this assumption has been examined by some feminists who have argued that despite women's domestic responsibilities, women are productive in their work and their contribution is no less than that of men (Elson and Pearson 1981; Beechy 1977). Since great stress is placed on Saudi working women fulfilling their domestic responsibilities, I investigated during my fieldwork the way in which the domestic orientation of Saudi women may affect their attachment and performance of their paid work.

When women enter the labour force, the first decision that women face is the placing of priorities on a career versus family. Which comes first, family or work? Most women interviewed (36 out of 50) stated that they did not make it a condition at the time of marriage that they should be permitted to work after marriage. Only sixteen respondents established such a condition. Their male guardians included in the marriage contract a stipulation that their husbands had no right to prevent their wives from working. In doing so, the marriage would be broken. Four of these women are nurses, three are doctors, four are secretaries, one is a businesswoman, two are teachers, and two are social workers.

In a society where marriage is an overriding goal in itself, a woman has no choice but to accept that she must put her family first. According to the sexual division of labour in the family,

women's work is always expected to be in a secondary position to that of men. Most Saudi people feel that if a woman fails to strike a balance between her two roles, she should withdraw from the labour force. Many working women pay a high psychological price for accepting this ideology. Thus, many women interviewed (41 out of 50) indicated that their families came first. From those forty-one respondents, twenty-nine claimed that if their husbands asked them to resign they would resign. Twelve said it depended on the situation, not on the husband's demands. Only nine argued that they would not resign even if their husbands asked them to do so. They believe that a woman has the right to work in the same way as men. In their view, since a woman cannot ask her husband to leave his job, a man has no right to ask his wife to leave her job.

These attitudes might be taken to imply that most women have little attachment to their work. Their domestic orientation makes them less committed. However, it is important to look not only at their statements but at their behaviour, and to examine in what way these attitudes affect their actual performance. My data show that although women always tend to emphasize the priority they give to their families, it is actually not always true that women do easily sacrifice their work for their families. Women are struggling not to sacrifice one for the sake of the other. Many working women conceive of their work as an important part of their lives. It is a great source of their self esteem. Some of them go as far as to say that work is their life and they cannot imagine life without it. It was striking that despite Saudi socialization and its

emphasis on the "femininity" of women, and the educational system and its stress on women's domestic role, most Saudi working women have great self confidence in their capacities at work. Almost all women interviewed believe that women can work the same if not better than men if they are given the chance.

Although forty-two out of fifty have small children under the age of five, they still keep on working. Most working women tend not to take more time off than their minimum maternity leave entitlement. Only nine respondents took a few extra months (from three to six months) after their period of maternity leave. Five respondents indicated that they applied for six months unpaid leave but their demand was refused because nobody else could take over their job. Thirty-six respondents indicated that they returned to work immediately after their maternity leave. For example, one of the headmistresses interviewed, who was pregnant during my first interview with her, emphasized to me that she would resign after she had her second baby because she believed that motherhood was the most important role in a women's life. However, during my second visit to the field, I found her still working. She explained that work was very important to her and that she could not live without it.

One of the important points to mention here is that although labour legislation in Saudi Arabia emphasizes that motherhood is greatly valued, and to protect this role women are restricted to certain jobs, working mothers are not given the facilities that would aid their performance of their double day. By law women are

entitled to have two months maternity leave after having their baby, and they can have up to six months unpaid leave on condition that their employer accepts. Because of the shortage of experienced female replacements in most female institutions, many working women cannot enjoy this right. In contrast, West Germany is planning to give all pregnant women "motherhood vacation money" of \$200 a month for a full year after giving birth (New Internationalist 1986). In Hungary, the "mothers' allowance" has been designed to pay women to stay at home for the first three years. In some countries it is not only women who have maternity leave, but fathers are entitled to have "paternity" leave as well (Molyneux 1981: 183).

Absenteeism is not frequent among working women. Thirty-eight out of fifty women interviewed emphasized that they were never absent without excuse and they did not exceed their authorized period of leave. Twelve respondents indicated that they exceeded their average period. Seven out of twelve stated that they were absent because their children were sick and they had to take them to a doctor and nurse them. Two out of twelve said that although they usually leave their children with their mothers or mothers-in-law, on certain days nobody was available to take care of the children while they were at work. One respondent indicated that her husband refused to drive her and she was not allowed to take a taxi. Two working mothers who have small children stated that having a small baby made them stay awake all night and prevented them from going to work early in the morning. Three important

factors I think affect women's absenteeism: the availability of child care services, women's attachment to their work, and the firmness of the administrative system.

There are different factors that affect women's attachment to their work such as their job satisfaction, the number of years of work experience, and work relationships. My data show that thirty-six women interviewed stated that they are satisfied with their job. Fourteen respondents said that they were not satisfied with their job because they were not treated fairly and they have not had the promotions they should have had. Some of them mentioned that they were not satisfied because they have no authority in decision-making, most decisions are taken by men without even consulting them about their opinions. Some of them noted lack of rewards in their jobs, so that there was little difference between those who work hard and those who do not. Finally, some teachers claimed that the curriculum they were teaching was dull and disorganized and needed to be revised.

It is interesting to mention that some working women indicated that because of the restrictions on women's movement, working women spend more time in their work than men do. Because of sex segregation rules, most Saudi men are expected to drive their wives and children to schools or workplace, and they are also expected to do the shopping for their families. Thus, many Saudi men are obliged to leave their work early to bring their children back home, and sometimes they leave their work during working hours to do some shopping. Working women usually do not leave their work

before the end of the working day.

Some working women I interviewed emphasized that having domestic responsibilities does not mean that they are less productive in their work. Because they enjoy their work, they try their best to give it as much effort as possible. As soon as they arrive at their work, they try to leave their familial problems behind and concentrate entirely on their work. They try hard not to take their family problems to work, or work problems back home. The only difference they mention is that they cannot give work the extra time that they might otherwise have given. They indicated that before marriage they used to devote all their time to work. Sometimes they would work overtime, or stay in their work longer than they were expected to do, because they had nothing else to do. After being married there are many social pressures on them to reduce their extra work because there is another job waiting for them at home. For example, some female doctors give up their medical practice allowance in the afternoons to give themselves more time to fulfill their domestic duties. They emphasized that it is not the quality of their work that they reduced, but the quantity.

Segregated Jobs

Occupational segregation between the sexes in Saudi society means that men and women work in separate offices. Official memoranda and the telephone are the channels of communication

between the sexes working in the same ministry. Working apart from men gives women the chance to feel autonomous and free in their dress and behaviour. Friendships are an essential part of the lives of women at work. Women are less formal with each other; they make a habit of calling each other by their first names, they share snacks or tea together, they exchange jokes, family news and gossip in their free time. Friends stick together and support each other. This support varies from one job to another; nurses and school teachers are more likely to help each other and take over each others' jobs. While doctors and teachers at the university stage can hardly substitute for each other in case of absence because of their different specialities.

Because of the restrictions on women's movement, the limited free time of working women, and the strong kinship relationships in Saudi families, thirty-one women interviewed out of fifty indicated that their relationships with their colleagues are restricted to the workplace. Their social visits are usually exchanged with school mates and close relatives. Nineteen women out of fifty stated that they exchanged visits with their work mates. They participated in informal get togethers *dawreyah* at each other houses every month. They also visit each other on certain occasions such as weddings, births, illness and funerals.

A cooperative atmosphere is dominant at the work place of women, particularly at schools where there is no promotional competition. This system was abolished a few years ago in female schools. Some female teachers felt happy that promotions were

abandoned. They indicated that only a small number of women benefited from promotions any way and these were not distributed fairly among teachers. Promotions were not given according to capacity but according to family status and access to patronage *wasita* (mediator).

Occupational segregation does not mean that there is an absolute segregation between sexes. Some female officials in higher jobs have to deal directly with men while wearing the *abayah*. Some women office workers play an intermediate role in transferring official papers between sexes. Segregation between sexes could be regarded as a hinderance for women's full participation in the labour force. But some scholars argue that occupational segregation enables Saudi women to be in parallel positions to men, thus giving women as many opportunities to work as possible (Economist 1986). This argument is to some extent true; women of course occupy most jobs defined as "female" jobs. There is no direct competition between sexes for jobs as there is in many desegregated societies. But this assumption is only true up to certain limits and, as we get higher in the occupational hierarchy, we find that most female decision-making jobs are held by men. There is no way for a woman to be in an executive job over male workers.

The fact that all decision-making positions are staffed by men makes women's performance of their work difficult. Men have more opportunities to carry out their work easily. If a man faces a problem, he can easily go to his boss to discuss it with him, while

women cannot do the same. If a woman has a problem at work and she wants to discuss it with her boss, she must send a man to discuss it on her behalf. She cannot go herself to male offices. Although she can use the telephone, this is not as effective as face-to-face discussion. Many respondents gave different examples of problems they faced in which they were obliged to send their husbands or brothers to negotiate with their male bosses. A teacher explained how she solved her problem at work as follows:

Working women do not have the same chance to express their opinion at work as men. Female teachers do not have any say about the subjects they are teaching. Last year I had a problem in one of the subjects I was teaching. Female officials working under the General Presidency of Girls Education did not have any power to make a decision. As a woman I could not go to this authority by myself. Thus, I tried to explain it to my husband who went and explained it later to male officials to ask them to solve it.

This problem is not a problem for teachers only but one that most working women face in their different jobs. Even in hospitals where women are working in the same place with men, some men directors and their domineering attitudes towards women do not encourage women doctors to come and discuss their work problems with them.

It is interesting to mention that one of the points that my respondents have discussed is that men are usually more flexible in their work than women. Women are very strict and more difficult to deal with than men. In my view, it is not a matter of sex differences but of work experience. Because men hold the authority

for decision-making and have more experience at work, they are more flexible in their decisions and facilitate each others' work. But women's lack of authority and their shortage of experience makes them more rigid in their approach to work than men. They are always worried about being blamed by their male bosses.

As I have previously explained, despite the obvious difficulties caused by sex segregation rules, one should not forget that the existence of sex segregation has encouraged many Saudi people to send their daughters to school or work. If there had been no sex segregation at schools or offices twenty years ago, many Saudi families might have not allowed their daughters to work or even to go to school. Most Saudi working women I interviewed (thirty out of fifty) prefer to work apart from men; they feel more comfortable in their dress and behaviour. Mixing with men is something unfamiliar in Saudi society and it conflicts with fundamental Saudi norms and values.

My data show that thirty-one out of fifty respondents prefer to work apart from men. Of those, thirteen attributed their feelings to religious beliefs; for them, mixing with men is against Islamic teachings. This point of view is represented by a teacher who commented:

Mixing with men is prohibited *haram* in Islam. If there was mixing between sexes at schools I would have been the first one not to go to school. Although I accompanied my husband to study abroad, I did not go to school because they had desegregated schools. I used to have a female tutor at home.

The same point of view is shared by some other women. A social worker said:

Wallahi I think segregation between sexes is better; *Al hamdullah* our society is a Muslim society. According to Islamic teachings a woman cannot be in privacy with a man without having Satan come between them. Mixing with men will cause many immoral acts.

Ten of my respondents supported sex segregation for social reasons. They emphasized that Saudi girls are brought up to be apart from men. There are always female spheres and male spheres. Thus, some Saudi women feel uncomfortable about mixing with men. Having a man in the same office would put great restrictions on women's talk and laughter. Some Saudi women find it difficult to deal directly with men. A teacher said:

Segregation between sexes is better; it gives a woman more freedom in her movements at work. A woman is shy by nature. She would feel discomfort if there was a man with her in the same office.

Another woman said:

I am not used to mixing with men, and I think segregation between sexes is better. Women feel more comfort and can relax without men. They can chat, laugh and joke freely. If women have to work with men, they have to wear the veil all the time, and they have to be very careful in their talk and jokes.

Because Saudi society is not accustomed to desegregation of the sexes, people cannot envision any relationship taking place between the sexes without a sexual relation intervening. Pettigrew (1981: 64) argues that because of the separation between sexes among the Sikhs of Punjab, a young woman seen talking to a man is invariably suspected of having a sexual affair with him. In the same way, desegregated jobs in Saudi society are always looked upon with suspicion. A bank teller said:

I would rather work apart from men. We used to work in the same offices with men. People used to gossip about us. We were restricted in our movements and behaviour. Now we work in separate offices, and we feel more comfortable. In other societies, mixing with men is common in all aspects of life; it is something acceptable for them. Thus, people do not think badly about women who work with men.

Some interviewees argued that although mixing with men is better and healthier for both sexes, they nonetheless think that Saudi society is not yet prepared for this. One day it will come but not under the current social conditions. This point of view was expressed by a lecturer as follows:

Although I believe that mixing between sexes is more healthy for a society, I think that our society is not yet prepared for it. Segregated jobs are better for the present. Peoples' attitudes towards women are still immature. Women are always looked upon as sex objects. If we have desegregated jobs women will have to mingle with different types of men, with good and bad men. This may cause many social problems and immorality.

Women who are working in desegregated jobs such as doctors, nurses and some social workers have another point of view. Most of these women support the idea of mixing with men at the work place. They claim that working with men gives them more experience. A female nurse said:

I think desegregated jobs are better; it gives me self confidence. I don't feel afraid of men. Men do not have the same fears as before. I treat them with more self respect than before. It has become normal for me to deal with men.

Most female doctors supported desegregated jobs but for other

reasons. For them, it is not only a matter of changing the nature of the relationship between the sexes, but it is for work experience as well. Since female doctors have the chance to mix with men during their university years, and most of them belong to more cosmopolitan families, they do not have the same reverential attitudes towards men. They emphasized that working with men gives them more experience. This point of view was represented in a female doctor's words:

Mixing with men is better for women. Men have more experience at work than women. So working with men gives us the chance to learn from them. In early Islam, women used to work with men and fight side by side with them. If it were because of Islamic teachings that women are not allowed to work with men in the present Saudi society, women could put on modest dress and work with men like in early Islam.

In sum, although many women support segregated jobs because they feel more comfort in their movements and dress, they are not accustomed to deal directly with men, and because they believe that it is against Islamic teachings to deal directly with men unveiled, desegregated jobs are preferred by some working women (twenty out of fifty) for the following reasons:

- (1) Since men have more experience at work, mixing with men gives women the chance to learn from men's experience.
- (2) Mixing with men gives women self confidence, making them more outspoken. They no longer fear men as they used to.
- (3) As most government offices are staffed by men and most shops employ men, mixing with men helps women to be independent and

carry out their tasks by themselves.

(4) Desegregation enables women to have greater understanding of men and gives them experience of dealing with men. Women who are working in desegregated jobs conceive of their relationship with male colleagues differently than women working in segregated jobs. While some women claim male colleagues are aggressive, others have found male co-workers very supportive and understanding. These men treat them with respect and try to help them if possible in their work.

Conclusion

As I have shown, education has opened new options for women to seek paid jobs. Work is regarded by most Saudi women as the only opening which they could look through to the outside world. Although the influx of wealth in Saudi society has enabled many families to live solely on the husbands' income, the consumption oriented nature of the society has encouraged many women from well-to-do families to seek paid job to maintain the status of the family.

The assumption that woman's primary role in life is to be a mother and housewife has prevented women from being seen as important participants in the labour force. In spite of the severe shortage of human resources, there are many restrictions that hinder Saudi women from wider access to employment. Women are restricted to certain jobs which are assumed to suit their 'nature'

such as: education, health services, social work, banking and private business.

Saudi working women face a contradictory situation. On the one hand, their domestic orientation makes them feel that home should come first in their lives. On the other, they feel that work is very important to them. It is a source of their self esteem and they are generally satisfied with their jobs. My data suggest that women's domestic responsibilities do not significantly affect their performance at work, and they try hard to fulfill demands made upon them. However the ideology of motherhood and the primacy of domestic work leaves them with many restrictions and little chance of position or authority. Working women who are satisfied with their work try hard to fulfill their work demands. Given the prevailing ideology and assumptions about gender relations it is not surprising that sexual separation continues to be particularly valued by many women.

Table VI.1

Numbers of Female Students from 1960 to 1981/82.

Years	Female
1960/61	11,753
1965/66	61,686
1972/73	211,900
1973/74	255,262
1974/75	310,067
1975/76	352,667
1976/77	390,552
1977/78	421,639
1978/79	463,728
1979/80	509,914
1980/81	571,442
1981/82	639,117

Source: Ministry of Education, Educational statistics in the Kingdom 1981/82: 94 and Abdel Wassa, Education in Saudi Arabia 1983: 78.

Table VI.2

Saudi Students by Stage and by Type of Education in 1981/82

Type of education	Male	Female	Total
Kindergarten	12,391	9,780	22,171
General Education			
Elementary	519,373	332,776	582,149
Intermediate	155,014	80,958	235,972
Secondary	61,823	33,790	95,613
Teaching Education			
Intermediate	421	0	421
Secondary	5,132	7,581	12,713
Higher	4,927	1,074	6,001
Technical Education			
Secondary	7,469	0	7,469
Higher	354	0	354
Special Education	1,396	549	1,945
Adult Education	77,858	47,620	125,478
University and Higher Education	31,512	16,321	47,833
Other	14,017	1,864	15,881

Source: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Education, No. 15.1 1/2: 72.

Table VI.3
Subjects Studied by University Graduated
Students in 1984/85.

Fields of study	Male %	Female %
Religious studies	12.4	6.6
Arts & Humanities	22.1	41.5
Education	15.9	32.8
Social sciences	21.4	7.1
Natural sciences	4.0	7.8
Engineering	13.9	—
Medicine	5.1	3.5
Agriculture	5.2	0.7
Total	100	100

Source: The Ministry of Planning, Fourth development Plan, 1985/90: 282.

Table VI.4
Nationality Composition of the Civilian
Labour Force 1984/85.

	Thousands
Saudi Men	1,649.2
Saudi Women	136.8
Sub-total: Saudi workers	1,786.0
Sub-total: Non-Saudi workers	2,660.0
Total workers	4,446.0

Source: Fourth Development Plan 1985-1990: 36.

Table VI.5
The Candidates for Jobs in the Civil Service
According to their Sex and Level of Education.

Level of Education	Male	Female	Total
Higher education	167	16	183
University degree	3'485	1 426	4'911
Less than university	1'570	352	1'922
Total	5'222	1'794	6'016

Source: Civil Service, Civil Service in Figures, 1983/84
:67

Table VI.6
The Distribution of Women in The Civil Service.

Type of institutions	Number	%
The Authority of female education	44700	86.2
Universities & higher education	1700	3.1
Ministry of Health	3856	7.4
Social Welfare	1425	0.8
Other Ministries	1278	2.5
Total	51959	100

Source: Civil Service 1986, unpublished paper.

Table VI.7
The Number of Saudi Women in Different Stages of
Education below Higher Education.

Stages of Education	1980		1985	
	Number of women	%	Number of women	%
Elementary	15,404	61.3	19,957	100
Intermediate	4,502	15.2	5,603	45.8
Secondary	1,896	15.3	2,562	42.5
Teacher Training	1,000	19	1,858	15.3
Adult Education	2,432	33.1	2,823	100
Others	1,307	56.4	1,932	70.9

Source: Ministry of Planning, Third Development Plan 1980/85:
312.

Table VI.8
The Distribution of Male and Female Teachers in
Higher Education According to Nationality 1980-81.

	Male	Female
Saudi	2,126	568
Non-Saudi	3,247	965
Total	5,373	1,533

Source: The Ministry of Education, Educational Statistical
Data 1981/82: 78.

Table VI.9
Numbers of Female Teachers at Saudi Society
from 1969/70 to 1982/83.

Years	Female Numbers
1969-70	4,946
1970-71	5,809
1971-72	6,978
1972-73	8,485
1973-74	10,220
1974-75	12,175
1975-76	14,865
1976-77	17,516
1977-78	19,902
1978-79	23,695
1979-80	28,120
1980-81	32,081
1981-82	38,009
1982-83	41,947

Source: The Ministry of Planning, The Achievements of
Development Plans 1984: 240

Table VI.10
The Number of Male and Female Graduates from Nursing
Schools from 1973/74 to 1982/83.

Years	Male	Female	Total
1973/74	226	56	282
1974/75	217	63	280
1975/76	227	79	306
1976/77	250	64	314
1977/78	175	85	260
1978/79	109	35	144
1979/80	144	39	183
1980/81	175	37	212
1981/82	140	55	190
1982/83	193	92	285
Total	1,856	605	2,461

Source: Civil Service in Figures 1983/84: 115.

Table VI.11

Male and Female Success in Official Promotions
in 1982/83.

Job grade	Male	Female	Total
First	129	3	132
Second	504	52	556
Third	468	57	525
Fourth	483	568	1,051
Fifth	434	33	467
Sixth	230	19	249
Seventh	205	0	209
Eighth	314	2	316
Ninth	216	2	218

Source: Civil Service Statistics 1983: 82.

Table VI.12

Male versus Female Success in Official Competitions
in 1982/83.

Jobs	Male	Female	Total
Dactylograghers	40	0	40
Transcript	206	56	262
Administrative	1,742	605	2,346
Financial	362	31	393
Special jobs	267	2	269
Technical & craft	518	43	561
Total	3,135	736	3,871
%	81	19	100

Source: Civil Service, Civil Service Statistics
1983: 82

Table VI.13

The Distribution of Officials in Public Institutions
According to Sex, Nationality and Salary in S.R.1983/84.

Sex & Nationality	Saudi		Non Saudi	
	male	female	male	female
Salary				
0 -2,000	959	12	1,929	124
2,000-3,550	4,222	100	7,290	1,247
3,550-5,685	8,779	146	5,361	337
5,685-8,336	6,560	86	3,833	101
8,336 & more	3,311	7	1,911	25
Total	23,831	351	20,324	1,834

Source: Civil Service, Civil Service Statistics
1983/84: 15

Table VI.14

The Educational Level of Both Spouses among my
Respondents.

Certificate	Wives	Husbands
Read & write	0	2
Elementary	0	1
Intermediate	7	9
Teaching diploma	5	1
Nursing diploma	5	3
Secondary	3	5
University	22	18
M.A	6	7
Ph.D	5	2
Total	50	50

Table VI.15
Male and Female Unemployment in Saudi Arabia.
in 1984

City	Male	Female
Riyadh	0	71
Jeddah	4	199
Dammam	21	220
Total	25	490

Source: Al Suderi 1984.

Table VI.16
Respondents' Motivations to Work .

-Being educated encouraged me to find a job.	20
-Economic need.	15
-To overcome boredom.	14
-"I am not used to sitting at home."	9
-To get self confidence and establish my identity.	9
-To seek a career.	1

Table VI.16
Respondents Motivations to Work .

-Being educated encouraged me to find a job.	20
-Economic need.	15
-To overcome boredom.	14
-"I am not used to sitting at home."	9
-To get self confidence and establish my identity.	9
-To seek a career.	1

Table VI.17
The Factors that Women Consider in Choosing their Job.

It satisfies my interests	17
The only job available	16
The nature of work suits a woman	8
Working hours are short	4
My qualifications	8
Good salary	6
I was directed to this job	3
Job location	3
My family chose it for me	2
Because my friends are working there	2
There is a chance for promotion	1
Because there is no mingling with men	1

Chapter VII

Women and Domestic Work

In the last chapter I discussed the impact of economic development on female employment in Saudi society. The present chapter discusses women's reproductive role in Riyadh as mothers and housewives. With the increasing number of women entering the labour force, more interest has been directed by sociologists and development planners to the impact of women's paid work on their domestic role in the family.

Most studies of working women argue that when women enter the labour force, they are confronted with a heavy schedule of work, and the problem of the "double day". Working women are expected to fulfill their paid and their domestic work. Some sociologists (King & Evenson 1983; Birdsall 1983) have used time allocation surveys to find out how working women manage to organize their time between paid work and domestic duties. This chapter explores the extent to which working women manage effectively to organize their time to meet the multiple demands made upon them. What are the strategies that working women adopt to integrate their paid work and their familial responsibilities?

The concept "housewife" is used by western society to refer to an unemployed wife who is dependent on her husband to support her

financially while she performs the housework. Oakley (1974: 1) defines a housewife as follows: "the person, other than a domestic servant, who is responsible for most of the household duties (or for supervising a domestic servant who carries out these duties).

However, the housewife concept, as understood in English, does not exist in the same form in the Arabic language. A woman who manages or directs the household affairs is called a "houselady" or *set-al-bait* and this concept is usually used for a married woman whether she is working or not; *set-al-bait* or "housewife" does not necessarily mean a non-working woman. Being employed does not imply, in Arabic, that a woman is not a housewife. Recent studies in western countries raise the same point that being employed in western countries does not mean that a woman is not a housewife. According to Saudi norms and values, all women from birth are destined to be *set-al-bait*. In effect housewifery is assumed to be one of the main characteristics of womanhood in Saudi society.

A housewife in "traditional" Saudi society was expected to do the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, dishwashing, grinding, milking and sewing. This domestic work, along with child bearing, was assumed to be the natural duty of women. The influx of wealth in Saudi Arabia has affected women's performance of their domestic work. While all domestic tasks were carried out manually in pre-oil society, most domestic tasks are carried out using electric appliances in the present day. While most domestic equipment was made by women in pre-oil society, all domestic equipment is purchased by women today. Housework nowadays is much easier for

the average Saudi woman today than in pre-oil society. Nonetheless, using domestic appliances does not necessarily imply that the time women spend in housework is less than before. Using technological equipment facilitates women's housework and encourages them to spend the same amount of time by refining or elaborating their housework (Vanek 1986). For example, while women in "traditional" Saudi society used to cook one dish for a meal, with the availability of cookers and other appliances, women tend to cook several different dishes.

Although child care is considered part of women's domestic work, I will discuss it separately, since all women interviewed tended to consider child care as something related to motherhood and having nothing to do with housework. However, I would like to emphasize that it is very difficult to make a separation between the time that women spend in housework and the time women spend in child care because women usually spend their afternoons doing both tasks at the same time.

As we have seen, the influx of wealth in Saudi society has created great socio-economic changes in the family in Riyadh. In pre-oil society the family was a productive unit; all family members including men, women and children participated in herding or agricultural activities. By saying that, I do not mean that women were on an equal footing to men. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, men were in a superior position to women in pre-oil society but, both men's and woman's work was essential for family subsistence. Bedouin and rural women contributed to a wide range

of unpaid productive tasks such as herding, weaving, planting and harvesting. All these tasks were very important for the survival of the family. Because there was no separation between the home and the work place, women's unpaid work at that time was not thought of as having any destructive impact on their reproductive role in the family. However, after the discovery of oil, the separation between the family and the work place became more marked. Men took the opportunity to seclude their women and establish themselves as the sole breadwinners of the family. Women were more restricted to the home, and their productive role in the family became marginalized. Nonetheless, women's education has enabled some women to seek paid jobs and to contribute to family subsistence once again. Still, in the present day, although many working women make a significant contribution to their families' budget, men are still regarded as the real breadwinners of the family.

One of the major changes in Saudi society after the discovery of oil is that the society has been transformed from a subsistence society based on herding and agricultural activities to a wealthy society based on the oil industry, and this has occurred in a short period of time. Saudi society has become one of the most consumption-oriented societies in the world on a per capita basis, with almost all commodities being imported from abroad.

The function of the family in Riyadh has been transformed in keeping with the transformation of the economic system, with the family now operating as a consumption rather than a production

unit. Saudi families tend to spend a lot of money on furniture, domestic equipment, food, clothes and toys-often spending in extravagant ways. All family members are encouraged to be consumers. The woman's role in the family entitles her to take decisions about family needs and thus involves her in consumer oriented behaviour. However, the restrictions on women's movement and their limited contribution to production make them feel that they are contributing less actively to the society than before. Being isolated and confined to their homes often makes them fail to appreciate the true value of things surrounding them. They do not appreciate the importance of time and the money they spend. When a woman suffers from boredom and isolation, she has little else to do except go shopping. Shopping has become one of the preferred entertainments of many Saudi women.

Two important commodities occupy the largest share of women's expenses: dresses and jewellery. Saudi women tend to buy more dresses than before. While some elderly women I interviewed emphasized that, in pre-oil times, they tended to buy one or two dresses a year, some younger women I interviewed indicated that, nowadays, they usually buy one or two dresses every month. Some Saudi women I met in Riyadh claimed that they could not resist buying new things every time they went shopping. Behind the veil, Saudi women from wealthy families tend to follow the latest fashions from Paris and Italy. Dresses have become the main interest of many women in Riyadh. Some women interviewed emphasized that most of their salaries were spent on dresses and

jewellery.

Most Saudi women from all family income levels tend to wear jewellery all the time. Women from different socio-economic backgrounds tend to wear different kinds of jewellery. For example, bedouin women have a great preference for gold, while urban women prefer to wear gold decorated with expensive diamonds. I remember that on one of my visits to Al Ghatghat, a small village near Riyadh, the first question I was asked there was "Why don't you wear gold, are you poor?" In Riyadh, women place much emphasis on wearing jewellery. This is a relatively new phenomenon. Some women compete with each other to wear more valuable things.

In my view, women's interest in jewellery is due to several factors. Increasing wealth in Saudi society has provided women the means to afford to buy gold. Many Saudi women consider jewellery as an investment and insurance for the future. Jewellery has also become a sign of high status in Saudi society; the more jewellery a woman wears, the higher the rank she is assumed to occupy.

Images of The Housewife

A housewife in "traditional" Saudi society, whether from a rich or a poor family, was expected to participate in most domestic tasks inside the home. A woman from a wealthy family, even if she had slaves or domestic servants, participated hand in hand in

cooking, cleaning and washing as we have seen in Chapter Four. After the influx of wealth in Saudi society, the gap between poor and rich families has become wider, and the gap between women's housework in poor and rich families has become greater. Women from rich families nowadays usually do not participate in any domestic work; they depend on domestic servants to do all the housework for them.

The image of a housewife has been greatly affected by these socio-economic changes. On the one hand, women are expected to perform all domestic tasks by themselves as they used to do in pre-oil society. On the other hand, the availability of domestic help has significantly reduced the amount of time that a housewife actively spends in housework. It is worth noting that twenty-five out of fifty respondents have domestic help. These changes have created a discrepancy between what a woman should do and what she is really doing. This difference gives rise to many accusations and criticisms in the Saudi press against Saudi housewives. Saudis accept all the material changes in their way of life - the luxurious cars, the western furniture, the T.V and video, and the improved roads, but they cannot accept the fact that a woman's housework, and therefore an important basis for her social valuation, has also changed too.

During my fieldwork, in the course of my analysis of Saudi newspapers, my relationships with many Saudi families and my intensive interviews with my respondents, I found out that the image of a housewife has greatly changed. In "traditional" Saudi

society the housewife was a subject of praise and respect, with emphasis being placed on housewives' hard work, their reliability and their dedication. In contrast, a housewife nowadays is regarded by many Saudis today as a lazy, narrowminded and unproductive person.

Thus, two conflicting images of a "housewife", one positive, the other negative, have become prevalent today. The positive image assumes that a housewife does all the housework by herself. She usually spends all her day in cooking, cleaning, and washing. She devotes all her time to her family and children. She is a dedicated woman who sacrifices herself to keep her husband and children happy. This image has always been the typical image of a housewife in "traditional" Saudi society. This image was clear in the words of a teacher who defined a housewife as follows:

She is a respectable woman; she fulfills all her domestic responsibilities by herself; she cooks and cleans. She knows how to bring up her children properly. She is a capable person. You could say that she is a school for preparing the new generation. As the poet has said: "A mother is a school; if you have brought her up well, you have brought up the whole generation well."

It is interesting to mention that the positive image of a housewife and her responsibilities is not the same among all women from different income groups, and is greatly affected by a woman's family status. Most women interviewed from poor families and from families of average income indicated that a housewife is the one who performs all domestic tasks by herself; she enjoys cooking, cleaning and washing. However, some of my respondents from wealthy

families defined a housewife as the good manager - one who knew how to give orders and how to manage her household affairs. My wealthy respondents placed little emphasis on housework itself. Because they usually have domestic servants to perform the housework for them, they do not consider housework to be such an important job to perform. For them, a good housewife is the woman who knows how to handle the household affairs. For example, a businesswoman defines a housewife:

A housewife is a good manager. She knows how to maintain her household affairs successfully and can win people's admiration. She is not the authoritative person, but the affectionate one. Some people think that a housewife should be very strict, but I think that the most important quality in a housewife is to be a loving person. You know, since I got married, I always have had something to do apart from my domestic responsibilities. I have never been just a housewife. I used to study in the first years of my marriage. Then I started my career. My husband knows that I am not a dedicated housewife. Thus, I don't feel guilty for not doing the housework by myself.

On the other hand, there is the negative image of a housewife from a rich family who does not participate in any housework. She has domestic servants to do the housework for her. A housewife from a rich family is assumed to spend all her time sleeping, shopping, and visiting. This image is present in the words of a bank teller:

Being a housewife implies to me being a woman who has nothing to do except sleeping and taking care of herself. She has a lot of time to spare; she does not have any responsibilities. She is unproductive.

The same idea is shared by a social worker who described the housewife as follows:

To me, a housewife is a woman who sleeps too much; she is fond of dressing. Many of my friends are not working and have domestic servants and drivers. They always ask me, "How could you wake up early and go to your work?" And I always answer "How could you sleep till mid-day?"

However, not all respondents see such an extreme polarization between the negative and positive evaluations. Some appear to have rather more ambiguous or contradictory attitudes. Although they described a housewife as a devoted and reliable woman, they also insisted that they didn't like to be known as such a person because, for them, a housewife is seen as restricted and narrow-minded with limited horizons. She knows about nothing except cooking and cleaning. Some of my respondents gave a general description of a housewife as a reliable and devoted woman, then they added "but in our society" or "but nowadays" and gave a negative image of a housewife. I will give different examples of respondents' words and their ambiguous attitudes towards the role. This point of view is represented in the words of a teacher who said:

I reckon that a housewife always considers her domestic role to be her only job in life. I don't like to be known as such. I have had the experience of being just a housewife, but I didn't enjoy it at all. I don't know why but the word *set-al-beit* (housewife) always reminds me of an old lady sitting at home all the time, who cannot read or write. She has nothing to do except housework.

The same point of view is shared by a university teacher who describes a housewife as follows:

To me, a housewife is a woman who stays at home. She likes domestic work; she enjoys cooking, cleaning and taking care of her children physically and emotionally. But in our society, a housewife is different. She is the woman who likes dressing and always goes shopping. She has a lot of time on her hands. She reads *Sayedat* (a woman's magazine in Saudi Arabia) and coaches her children.

Several different factors account for the emergence of this negative image in Saudi society. Increasing wealth has led to an increase in the employment of foreign workers at the work place and foreign domestic help at home. Thus, many Saudi women feel that they have lost their productive value. Female education makes educated women feel that there are other options for them and education helps women to seek employment and to be financially independent. Finally, the availability of domestic help makes some Saudi women feel that housework is a demeaning job which any domestic servant can perform, and which requires no special capacity or skill.

Women's Own View of Domestic Tasks:

Many housewives interviewed during my fieldwork felt that housework was a monotonous and repetitive task. They emphasized that they were not interested in housework because it is an endless job, requiring constant renewal. They also pointed out that housework, because of its continuous demands, is responsible for

isolating women and enclosing them within four walls. In their view, it does not give women the chance to grow up intellectually or to enrich their experience in life.

Many of women's attitudes towards domestic work are related to their childhood, and the way they were introduced to their domestic responsibilities. Socialization plays an important role in women's conceptions of masculine and feminine characteristics. Women's unquestioned assumption that they are born to be mothers, makes them accept their domestic role as a natural one. Saudi women's behaviour is strongly governed by norms and values about their "proper" familial roles. Because Saudi women are brought up to believe that to be a housewife is the most respectable role for women and also, their primary responsibility, many women accept their domestic role as part of their destiny. Eighteen out of fifty respondents stated that they started their domestic training at the age of seven. They used to help their mothers in cooking, dishwashing, and cleaning. For them, housework was an important part of their daily routine in childhood. They claimed that housework is a woman's duty, and they take it for granted that a good housewife should like domestic work.

Sometimes, I got the impression that these women believe that a woman is not a woman if she does not like housework. They mentioned with pride that they do enjoy housework. Some of them stated that housework reduced strain and nervousness for them, perhaps because housework does not need much concentration or thought. Thus, they usually forget their problems while doing

housework. But it is important to mention that most of these women who said that they liked housework, have domestic help who do most of this work, while they themselves only help on occasion. A teacher and a mother of three children who had a domestic servant expressed this point of view as follows:

I do like housework because I think it is the primary responsibility for a woman to perform. The home is a woman's empire. She is free to do anything she likes there. Women should not consider housework to be the responsibility of the domestic help only. A child should be proud that his mother does everything for him.

The same point of view is supported by a social worker and a mother of three children, who also had a domestic servant. She said:

I like housework; I feel psychologically happy when I do housework. When I have a problem, I like to do some housework. I like cleaning and tidying up but I don't like washing up and cooking. I do cook but I don't feel happy when I cook. But I am the kind of person who, if I do something, I like to do it properly.

A secretary at a university and a mother of two children, who had a domestic help, expressed her support of this point of view as follows:

Of course I like housework; I enjoy everything about it. I like washing, cooking and cleaning. I like to dress my children. This is the role that I was born to do. I only dislike ironing. Sometimes I think of leaving work and staying at home to take care of my children, but I am afraid I'll get bored and regret losing my job.

Twelve out of fifty women interviewed indicated that they did not mind doing housework. They did not enjoy it, but they did not hate it. Housework is something they are used to doing and they have to do. It has become part of their daily routine. Some of them stated that they have never asked themselves whether they liked it or not because it is something they have to do. A teacher and a mother of one child said:

I don't mind doing housework. Since I don't have a domestic help, I do all the housework by myself. I hate housework only when I am not feeling well, and then particularly ironing. It complicates my life. I hate ironing *alghortrah* (the white cloth that Saudi men put over their heads. It is usually made from a delicate material and needs time and skill to iron. It takes me ages to finish one. Maybe it's because I used not to do any housework before getting married, and suddenly I found myself responsible for doing everything at home.

The same point of view was expressed by another teacher and a mother of three children, who did not have a domestic help:

I don't dislike housework. It is a woman's primary responsibility. I have never asked myself whether I like it or not because I know that it is my duty as a woman. The only thing I hate in domestic work is washing, because having three small children means that I have to wash and iron almost every day.

Twenty out of the fifty women interviewed claimed to dislike housework. They argued that although it is hard work and takes a long time to finish, it is devalued and not appreciated. It is a manual, not an intellectual, task. It is boring work which a woman has to repeat everyday. Housework isolates women from the outside

world.

Women give opposing explanations for their dislike of domestic work. Some of them indicated that they disliked it because, when they were young, they were obliged to do a great deal each day in addition to their homework. Thus, they rebelled against it when they they grew up. On the other hand, some women said that they disliked housework because they were not trained to do any housework when they were young. The former point of view is represented by a doctor who stated:

I don't like housework very much, but I would say that cleaning and ironing are more tolerable than cooking and washing. Maybe I dislike housework because I feel a sense of rebellion against my childhood. When I was young, I was pushed to do a lot of housework. Even during the examination period, I used to help my mother with housework. I think I used to do more housework when I was young than I am doing nowadays.

A businesswoman supported this point of view when she said:

I hate housework; the only thing I like is decorating. I don't like even to be known as a housewife. Ever since I opened my eyes in this world, I was always told that I had to learn cooking and cleaning to be a good housewife. Nowadays, I hate cooking. I cook only if I don't have domestic help, but I don't enjoy it. I don't like to cook because I don't want my husband to get used to it and keep asking me to cook.

The later point of view is expressed by some working women who argue that they do not like housework because they were not trained to do any housework before they got married. Female education, on

the one hand, and the availability of foreign domestic help on the other, have encouraged non-domestic attitudes among Saudi girls. Nowadays a girl's participation in domestic work does not constitute a major part of her up-bringing. A doctor said:

I don't like housework, and I don't enjoy it as I enjoy my work. This could be due to the fact that I was not trained to do any housework before I got married.

Women's Performance of Housework

The time that working women spend on housework varies dramatically from one woman to another according to family wealth. Women from wealthy families usually do not participate in domestic work of any kind. Their only role in the family is to supervise the domestic servants. Women from poor families perform all the housework single-handed. A woman from a poor family has to wake up early in the morning, prepare the breakfast, prepare the children for school, tidy up the rooms, and prepare herself for work. When she returns from work, she changes her children's clothes and prepares lunch. After lunch, she has to clean the kitchen, wash up the dishes, wash and iron the clothes and coach the children or at least take care of them. She also has to cook the food for the next day. At night she prepares dinner for her family. She usually does not visit anybody during the week. From early morning until late at night she has no chance to rest.

The domestic help phenomenon is not new in Saudi society (see El-Eidan 1985). As I have mentioned in Chapter Four, women from

wealthy families in pre-oil society used to have slaves or servants for a wide range of domestic duties. Most rich families in the Arabian Peninsula used to have slaves (who were usually considered to be members of the household). With the abandonment of slavery in 1963 by King Faisal, most rich families began to employ foreign domestic servants to replace their slaves.

However, this phenomenon was limited to rich families only. With the oil boom after 1973, more Saudi families with average incomes began to be able to afford domestic help, most of which comes from the Far East where low wages are prevalent: the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The availability of employment agencies in these countries has facilitated the phenomenon. Some families tend to employ domestic help from some Arab countries such as Egypt, Sudan and Morocco. A number of different factors have led to the widespread distribution of foreign servants, in particular:

(1) The oil boom and the sudden increase of wealth in Saudi society.

(2) Growing affluence has affected different aspects of Saudi family life. As we have seen, the Saudi family has become very consumption-oriented. Houses tend to be bigger than before, with western furniture which takes time to clean and polish. Saudi people tend to buy more clothes and most of these clothes are not practical and take considerable time to be ironed. The Saudi diet has become a mixture of different dishes which require time to be prepared.

(3) Increasing affluence has also encouraged Saudi people to maintain their customs of hospitality and to have frequent parties among kin and friends.

(4) Sex segregation rules in Saudi society require a domestic servant to keep Saudi women from mixing with strange men like visitors, or workmen, from serving at table for male guests, or from putting the rubbish outside the house, etc.

(5) The breakdown of the extended family system in Riyadh has put more domestic pressure on women. This is all the more true since male domesticity is still rejected in Riyadh, as we will see in the next chapter. This means that women are expected to perform all domestic tasks single-handed.

(6) The lack of a baby sitting system or day care centres for pre-school children, and the shortage of nurseries, make it necessary for a woman to have someone to look after her children while she is not at home.

(7) Domestic help has become a sign of high status in Riyadh. Also, the nationality of the domestic servant provides another indicator of her employer's status. Because Filipinos usually command higher salaries than domestic help from other Far Eastern countries, they are more frequently hired in Riyadh.

Although foreign domestic servants are widespread in Saudi society, it is not correct to assume that all families have domestic help. Of my fifty respondents, fifteen had no such help. Thirteen out of these fifteen said they did not have servants because they could not afford them. The other two emphasized that

they could afford to hire domestic help but they did not do so for different reasons. One of them said that she and her husband believed that it was religiously unacceptable to have a strange woman with them all the time. The second said that she and her husband thought it was inhuman to have someone serve them and that they are afraid of a servant's potentially negative influence on the children.

My data indicate a close relationship between family income and the number of servants. Most of my respondents whose salaries are less than S.R.10,000 do not have any domestic help. As the family earns a higher salary, it tends to have more domestic help. Most families who have one domestic servant have salaries ranging between S.R.10,000 to 28,000 monthly. Table (VII.2) shows the positive relationship between family income and the number of domestic servants they employ.

In addition to family income, other factors which affect the decision to increase the number of servants include the size of the house and the number of children. As I have mentioned before, the increase in wealth in Saudi society has encouraged people to have bigger houses than before. Thirty-four out of fifty respondents have from 5 to 10 rooms, and having more rooms naturally means more housework for women to perform.

The total number of rooms that the 50 respondents have amounts to 327, which means that their average house size consists of 6-7 rooms.

The number of children also affects the decision to employ more

domestic servants.

The Changing Nature of Domestic Work:

The influx of wealth in Saudi Arabia has created significant changes in the nature of domestic work. One of the way of spending this money is hiring domestic servants to facilitate women's domestic role. The availability of domestic help has dramatically reduced women's housework. The time that working women spend in housework varies from woman to another. Six out of fifty respondents stated that they did not participate in any housework unless they did not have domestic servants available. Two respondents from rich families claimed that they do some housework, but only when they have guests. They usually cook the traditional Saudi dishes which the domestic does not cook well. Most women interviewed stated that they preferred cooking to other domestic work because it is a creative task requiring talent and taste. While ironing is regarded as the most boring task.

Having domestic help does not mean that women do not participate in any housework. Nine out of the thirty-five women who have domestic help do the cooking, eight help in hoovering, six help in cleaning and tidying up, and five help in washing and ironing.

There are other subsidiary factors which affect the time women spend in housework such as the number and age of children.

In addition to the domestic servant phenomenon, there seem to be other factors which affect women's domestic time such as the type of the family. In the case of not having domestic servant, my data show that women living in nuclear families tend to spend longer hours in housework than women living in extended families. Women in extended families usually share housework, which makes it easier for working women to combine their paid work with domestic role. Working women with small children feel more secure when they leave their children with their mothers-in-law than with a domestic servant.

In contrast to other studies (Rapoport & Rapoport 1980; King and Evenson 1983) which say that the longer the hours women spend in their paid work, the fewer hours they spend in the housework, my data indicate that this argument is true only under certain circumstances. Some of my respondents who work eight hours outside their homes, do very little housework. However, I think it is not the amount of time that women spend in their work that reduces their housework but their position in the labour market. Most women who work longer hours occupy good jobs, and they have good salaries, which enable them to substitute their labour by employing domestic help. Nevertheless, some respondents such as nurses without domestic servants spend up to eight hours in their paid job and spend up to eight hours at housework.

Case Studies

We can gain a more vivid picture of how working women manage to organize their time between domestic work and paid work, by looking at some examples of informants' daily routines. I have tried to choose different examples of women interviewed from different levels of family income, from different occupations, and from different types of family, both extended and nuclear.

Case One:

Sheikhah is a nurse and her husband is not working. He was a chemist's assistant and because of a drink problem, he was suspended from his job. She is 23 and he is 25 years old. They have been married for four years and have three children aged 3, 2 and one year old. They live in a small flat with two bedrooms, a sitting room, a living room where they usually have their meals, a kitchen, and a bathroom. She described her efforts to reconcile her two roles as follows:

I started working when I was sixteen years old. I had hoped to continue my studies but financial need obliged me to begin work early to support my younger brothers and sisters. Although my father was alive, he did not support us because he had another wife and children. I worked for three years before getting married. Everything was all right; there was no problem about my working then. I enjoyed my work. But since I have been married, problems have started to develop. My husband used to drink, but I did not know anything about it. He used to come home late at night and he was not in his usual condition. I did not know what was wrong with him. One day I caught him with a bottle in his hand. At the beginning I thought it was perfume, but when I saw him drink from it, I realized that it was alcohol. I was very angry and asked for a divorce. I told him, "I can bear anything except drink. It is not wrong to be poor, I can bear poverty, but I cannot bear a

drunk". And because of alcoholic problems, he was always absent. He was warned several times by his boss, but he did not listen until he was suspended. When my husband drinks at night, he cannot wake up early in the morning to take me to my work. He also does not allow me to go by taxi. Thus we always quarrel over this problem. I know if I were in another job, I would have been suspended a long time ago. My boss is a very understanding person and she knows how badly I need my job to support my little children. Normally I wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning. I usually prepare my children's clothes the day before. I dress my children and give them breakfast. I change my clothes, and my husband and I take them to my mother or my mother-in-law. My husband does not like to take care of the children, even if he is not working. My work lasts from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. My husband comes and picks me up and we collect our children. Usually, I cook the food the day before. As soon as I arrive home, I prepare lunch. After lunch my husband has a nap and I start my housework. I clean the table, wash the dishes, clean the house, tidy up the rooms, wash and iron the clothes, cook the food for the next day and watch the children while they are playing. Sometimes, I feel that my children love their father more than me. Even though he is unemployed, he does not like to stay at home. He likes to go out in the morning and afternoon visiting his friends and relatives, or shopping. Thus, the short time he stays at home, he usually plays with them and that is why they love him. But because I have all the responsibilities of feeding, bathing, dressing and nursing them, I am always shouting at them, "Don't do this and don't do that". My children usually have dinner at 9 o'clock at night and go to bed, and I continue my domestic work. Sometimes I cry from tiredness. When I was in my family's house I used to have a rest in the afternoon. Now from early in the morning until late at night I do not have a chance to rest.

Case Two

Fatmah is 45 and her husband is 48 years old. She is a social worker and he is an official in social security. They have been married for twenty years and have six children. She has been working for fourteen years and did not employ domestic help until six years ago. She managed to have her six children and to

organize her time between her paid work and family responsibilities as follows:

At the time I started working, I had three children. I used to work two shifts a day from 8 a.m. to 12 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. We used to leave home at 7:15 in the morning, and I dropped my youngest son at my neighbour's for her to look after him while I was at work. We took our children to their schools and then my husband dropped me at my work and went on to his work. At 12 o'clock when work finished he picked me up and we collected our children and went home. He then returned to his work until 2 o'clock. I used to cook our food the day before, so when I arrived home I cleaned the house, tidied up the rooms and prepared the lunch. I used to send our sheets and my husband's clothes to be washed and ironed. I washed my clothes and my children's clothes at home, but most of our clothes were polyester which did not need to be ironed. As soon as my husband came back from his work, we had our lunch. After lunch I washed up the dishes and helped my children with their homework until 3:45 p.m.; then I went back to my work. My husband looked after the children during that time. At 6 p.m. my husband picked me up from work with the children and we went home. When I arrived home, I prepared the dinner and started cooking for the next day. I washed the clothes and I did the rest of the housework. I never went to bed before 1a.m. I was working very hard during that period. When I had my fifth child, I started to feel more exhausted. So we employed a Filipino girl to help me with the housework. Now I feel more comfortable in managing my two roles.

Case Three

Nourah is 24 years old. Her husband is 26. They are cousins, and they are both teachers. They have been married for 5 years and have two children, a girl 3 years old and a boy fourteen months. Since they got married they have been living with her in-laws. Her father-in-law is 62 years old, and he has two wives. Her mother-in-law is 60 years old, and the second wife is 40 years old.

Her mother-in-law has one son only; the second wife has four children aged 17, 15, 13 and 10 years. Their house consists of 4 bedrooms, a sitting room, a kitchen and two bathrooms. Nourah has one room only for her and her husband and children. She manages to combine her two roles as follows:

The housework is divided between me and my husband's step-mother and her daughter. The stepmother cooks the food, I clean the house and my sister-in-law does the washing up. At the weekend, on Thursday and Friday, I cook the food and his step-mother cleans the house. I am responsible for washing and ironing my family's clothes, while she is responsible for washing and ironing her family's clothes. In summer we exchange the housework; I cook one day and she cooks the following day. During school time, I wake up at 6 a.m. I prepare the breakfast, I tidy up my bed, I get dressed very quickly, I have a quick breakfast, and I leave home with my husband at 7 a.m. My mother-in-law takes care of the children while I am at work. His stepmother cooks the lunch. We return home at 1 p.m. and I lay the table and we have our lunch. My husband's sister washes the dishes while I clean the house. My husband has a nap in the afternoon. When he wakes up, we have our afternoon tea. Then he goes out shopping or visits his friends while I wash and iron the clothes. I also tidy the rooms and look after the children. We usually have our dinner at 8:30 p.m. Then we watch T.V, and go to bed at 11 p.m.

Case Four

Hessah is 28 years old. Her husband is 30 years old. She is a secretary in an orphanage and her husband is a soldier. They have been married for 8 years and have three children aged 7, 4 and 5 months. They live in a flat with three bedrooms, sitting room, living room, kitchen and bathroom. She has a Sri Lankan domestic help who earns S.R.450 monthly. She explained how she manages to

fulfill her double day as follows:

During the first year of my marriage, I lived with my family-in-law. Some problems arose between me and my sister-in-law because I was working and she was not. She was doing more housework than I did. So we moved to a separate house, and I had my first son without having domestic help. I used to take my son to my mother every morning and come back to pick him up in the afternoon. I kept on doing so for two and half years. Then I had my second baby, and we started to think of having a domestic servant. We hired a Ceylonese servant who stayed with us for two years. Then she returned to her country, and we hired another one. This one has been with us for almost two years. I wake up at 6 a.m. I pray and prepare the breakfast, and I help my son to get dressed. My husband wakes up at 6:30 a.m. He shaves and dresses; we have our breakfast and we leave home at 7 a.m. I arrive at work at 7:15 a.m, although the work starts at 8 a.m. Because my husband's place of work is far away, he has to drop me off first, drop my son at his school and then go to his work. While I am at work, the Ceylonese servant cleans the house, washes the clothes and takes care of the children. My husband picks me up on his way home at 2 p.m. I lay the table and we have our lunch at 2:45 p.m. We have some rest for an hour, then we have tea. My husband goes out to visit his parents or to shop while I help my son with his homework. I tidy up the house, I look after my young children and cook the lunch for the next day. At 8:30 p.m I prepare the dinner. I put my children to bed and then we watch T.V. Usually we go to bed at midnight.

Case Five

Laila and her husband are doctors. She is 28 years old and her husband is 31. They have been married for two years and have 8 month old baby. They are living in two bedroom flat, with sitting room, kitchen, and two bathrooms. She has a Filipino domestic help who earns S.R.700 monthly.

Before I got married, I used to work very hard in the hospital from 8 a.m to 4 p.m. I always enjoyed my job. Sometimes when I had an interesting case, I used to

return to work at night to follow it. After I got married, I felt some pressure between my two roles. I cannot stay in the hospital after 4 p.m. because I have other duties waiting for me. I am not only a doctor, but also a housewife. People do not forgive you if you do not fulfill your familial responsibilities. After my son was born, I used to take him to my mother to look after him while I was at work. My mother was always encouraging me to stop my afternoon work to give more time to my son and my house. So, after a while, I had to give up my medical practice allowance. Now that I work from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., I've found it much easier to perform my double roles. I wake up at 6:45 a.m., I get dressed and dress my son. We have breakfast and leave home with my son and the servant. We drop my son at my mother's because I don't trust the Filipino girl to look after him. Then my husband drops me at the hospital and he goes to his work. At 2 p.m. he picks me and my son up and drops us at home and then he goes back to his work until 4 p.m. We have our dinner when my husband comes back. We change our dinner time according to my husband's schedule. Sometimes he has night shifts from 4 p.m. to 12 midnight. So, we have our dinner when he comes back. The servant usually hovers the house and washes the clothes in the afternoon, while I tidy up the house, cook the food and take care of my son. If my husband does not have a night shift, we go to bed at 11 p.m., but if he has we sleep at 2 a.m.

Case Six

Nouff is a social worker and her husband is an engineer. They have been married for 8 years and have four children aged six, four-and-a-half, three-and-a-half and three months. They live in a villa with 8 rooms. She has an Indonesian girl who works for S.R.500 monthly. She described her daily routine as follows:

I have an Indonesian girl; she performs most of the housework and takes care of my daughter while I am at work. I do the cooking and help her in the afternoon. I usually do most of the housework at the weekend and I have all the responsibilities of my children. I wake up at 6 a.m. I wash and pray, having prepared the children's clothes the day before. I wake the children and get them

dressed and by that time, the Indonesian girl has prepared the breakfast. My children get their breakfast while I feed my little girl and change her clothes. Then I get dressed and go down. The school bus usually passes for my children at 7 a.m. My husband gets ready, and we have our tea while I make sandwiches for me and my husband. We leave home at 7:15 a.m. My husband drops me first and then goes to his work. While we are away, the Indonesian girl cleans the house and hooovers it and takes care of my daughter. My children usually come back from school at 12:30 a.m. They have snacks and watch the video until we come back. My husband passes for me at 2 p.m. We arrive home at 2:30 p.m. We change our clothes and have some rest and read the newspser until the asr prayer. My husband goes to the mosque and I prepare the food, which I usually cook the day before. After lunch we have afternoon tea; then I start coaching my eldest daughter and I put cartoons on the video for the younger children. Sometimes I go with my husband to visit my family or his family or go to the supermarket, but I try not to go out during the week, I usually cook at night for the next day's lunch. I prepare dinner at 8 p.m., then I put my children to bed. Afterwards I watch the T.V with my husband, and we usually go to bed between 11 to 12 midnight.

Case Seven

Salhah is 36 years old and her husband is 38. They have been married for three years and have one daughter 18 months old. She is a headmistress and her husband is a businessman. They live in a villa with 4 bedrooms, sitting room, dining room, living room, kitchen and three bathrooms. She has two domestic servants. One is a Filipino earning S.R.700 monthly and the other is an Indonesian who earns S.R.500 monthly. They also employ a driver for SR 1,000 monthly. She managed to combine her two roles as follows:

When I got married, I decided to employ a servant to do the housework because I did not want my work to cause any disruption to our family life. I think that if a working woman does not work out of need, and she has

children while not having a servant to help in domestic work, it is better for her to stay at home and take care of them. Otherwise she will not enjoy the money she gets from her work because she will be at work in the morning and busy with children and housework in the afternoon. When my daughter was born, I hired another servant, and I divided the housework between them - the Filipino girl for cooking, cleaning the first floor and washing up and the Indonesian girl for cleaning the second floor, washing, ironing and taking care of my baby. My husband always has friends in the afternoon, and sometimes we have some of his relatives, who are living outside Riyadh, for a few days. I organise my life in this way. Every day I wake up with my daughter at 6 a.m. I wash and get dressed. I drink an orange juice with my daughter, then I leave home with the driver at 7 a.m. while my husband is still sleeping. I arrive at school at 7:15 a.m.; the school starts at 7:30 a.m. but I always like to be there early. While I am at work, the servants clean the house, wash the clothes if we have any washing, take care of my daughter and cook the lunch. They usually iron in the afternoon. My husband wakes up between 10 and 11 a.m. and goes to work. I finish my work at 2 p.m. Sometimes I find my husband waiting for me and sometimes I have to wait for him for lunch. After lunch we like to rest for a while. At 5 p.m. my husband goes to his friends and I go with my daughter to visit my mother. I visit my mother every day. I return home at 8 p.m. and we have dinner at 8:30 p.m.. Usually my husband has some friends to visit at night. So I sit with my daughter in the next room; we watch video and television. I go to bed at 11 p.m.. Sometimes I go to bed before my husband's friends leave, but I have to sleep early because I have to wake up early in the morning.

Case Eight

Seham is 33 years old and her husband is 43. She is a businesswoman; she has an antique shop and a dress factory. She does not serve customers by herself, but she employs some men to do so. She and her husband have been married for fourteen years and have three children, aged 11, 10 and 5 years old. They live in a villa with 8 rooms. She has three domestic servants, a Habasheyah

woman from Sudan for S.R.2,000 monthly, a Moroccan for S.R.1,000, a Thai for S.R.1,000 as well as a Sudanese driver for S.R.2,000. She described how she organized her daily routine as follows:

I have three servants. The Habasheyah looks after everything concerning the children and their clothes, the Moroccan is the cook and the Thai sees to the cleaning, washing and ironing. The other servants help her with the housework as well. I supervise the housework but, God forbid, I don't do any housework. I hate housework and ironing in particular. I wake up at 9 a.m. I go to exercise lessons for one hour every day. Sometimes I have an appointment to go to or, otherwise, I will sit in my office at home. Most of my business is handled by telephone. I have to drop in to the dress factory for half-an-hour to see how the work is going. At 2 p.m. we have our lunch, then we have a nap for one hour. A teacher comes to coach my children in the afternoon. I have to sit with my children for at least one hour before they go to bed at 8:30 p.m. Sometimes we have a dinner party at night, or I sit in my office doing some work. I have never gone to bed before 1 a.m.

From all these cases it is obvious that there is an unequal division of labour between the sexes in the Saudi family. Even when women enter the labour force, they are still expected to fulfill their domestic responsibilities as mothers and housewives. The only change is that they postpone their morning domestic tasks until the afternoon and reduce their leisure time and visiting. Most women interviewed emphasized that work has dramatically reduced their afternoon outings and visitings. Thus, the main factor that reduces women's housework, whether women are working or not, is the availability of domestic help.

Even if a man is not working as in Case One, he does not participate in any domestic work. I think it is not only the

economic factor that makes a man the head of the family but also the cultural and social factors which give men access to public life. Because a man is assumed to be the head of the family, his work always comes first. All family conditions are adjusted to his work schedule as in Case Five. In contrast to that, a woman is expected to adjust her pattern of working according to her domestic duties. There are always social pressures on working women, either to put their families first or to withdraw from the labour force. It is always assumed that women's employment should come in a secondary position to their familial responsibilities. As the cases show, many women, particularly those from lower income households, have a complex and demanding schedule of activities which entails long working hours. At the same time, they present their daily organization of time as inevitable, acceptable and natural.

Most studies about working women in general and about women in Third World countries in particular assume that all working women face the same material constraints in performing their double's roles (Buvinic 1983; Papanek 1978; Birdsall 1983). The present study demonstrates that working women's housework varies dramatically from one woman to another according to family income. While women from rich families have domestic help and do not participate in any domestic activities, women from lower income families do all the housework single-handed. The domestic servant phenomenon has partially solved the problem of the "double day" and reduced the burden of housework of working women from high and

middle income families. Thus, not all Saudi working women have the same problem of material constraints when combining their paid work with familial affairs.

Working women from low-income families still have a great burden of domestic work and paid work. No efforts are made to reduce the amount of time that working women spend in domestic work by such means as day care centres, nurseries, baby sitting systems, or cheap take-away food.

A mother often plays an important role in her working daughter's life. She provides support so that her daughter may carry out her work as in Case One, and she is a source of control on her daughter's career as in Case Four. Because the mother-daughter relationship is very close, a working daughter usually listens to her mother's advice.

Mothering Role

Motherhood is greatly valued in Islam. It is mentioned in the Koran that one should feel more gratitude toward mothers than toward fathers, because of the difficulties and pain they face during pregnancies and in the first two years (Surat 46: 14). Many women in "traditional" Saudi society feel that their only role in life is to produce children, whether they were happily married or not, and whether they were financially, physically, and psychologically able to bring them up or not. As soon as a woman becomes a mother, she is expected to sacrifice herself for her

children. She is not supposed to have her own life apart from them. Everything in her life should be devoted to her family's welfare. A man does not have the same pressures in his fatherhood role.

As I have mentioned in Chapter Five, many Saudi women consider having children is very important for ensuring the continuation and stability of their marital relations. Some of them worry that if they do not have enough children, this might lead to divorce or a second wife. Children are regarded as the assurance of support for women in their elderly days. It is common to hear people in Riyadh say, "It is important for a woman to get married; even if her marriage fails, at least she will have children for the future". This indicates that one of the most important functions of women, in Saudi society, is to produce children.

One of the factors that encourage women to place more emphasis on children is the weakening of extended kinship relations. Extended kinship relations were very strong in "traditional" Saudi society. It was a social obligation for a person to support his cousins if they were in difficulties. Nowadays, with the increase in individuality and the absence of a state social security system, many Saudi women feel that children are their ultimate guarantee in old age, rather than an extensive network of kin. Thus, despite women's education and its impact on women's consciousness of their rights to control their own bodies, and women's employment and its effect on women's feeling of

security, the social and cultural pressures on Saudi women lead them to continue to emphasize their procreative role.

The desire to have children is not only felt by both partners but by their natal families as well. Young couples always experience pressure from their mothers or mothers-in-law to have children. My fifty respondents have 130 children, an average of 2.6 children per women. 35 of the 130 children that my 50 informants had had were unplanned children. Because of the low population density in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government is strongly pro-natalist. Thus, there are no family planning centres in Saudi Arabia. Many women do not have enough information about contraceptive methods. Most use the pill as their contraceptive method. Until recently, contraceptive pills had been available without prescription in Saudi pharmacies, and women used it without a regular doctor's check up, and sometimes behind their husbands' backs. Now, pills are obtainable only on doctor's prescription, but they are still widely available.

The number of children that respondents have is relatively small in comparison with the average family size in Riyadh, which was 6,6 in 1984 (Al Shar'a 1984). But one should not forget that most respondents are under the age of thirty. Education delays the age of marriage in Saudi society. Most women interviewed indicated that they were planning to have up to four children and some of them stated that they were going to have as many children as possible.

Many sociological studies (Fapanek 1975; Blumberg 1975;

Srivastava 1975) argue that women's work tends to reduce fertility. Employed women tend to have fewer children than those who are non-employed. In my view, although female employment is one of the factors that affects women's decision to control their fertility, other factors such as: family status, education, employment and the availability of contraceptive methods are also important.

My data indicate that the higher the women's family status, the more power they have over the decision to have children, and vice versa, the lower the family status, the less power they have. Women from low-income families tend to have very short intervals between pregnancies. Education also affects women's decision to have children. Educated women are usually more conscious of their bodies and their right to decide when to have children. It also makes women more aware of their role as mothers. Many women whom I interviewed feel that having children is a responsibility more than a pleasure. A teacher said:

Children are the ornaments of life. You realize their value when they grew up. But at the same time, they are a big responsibility. Once you have children, you should do everything to keep them happy. Even if a woman is not happy with her marriage, she is not supposed to ask for divorce and leave her children to be mistreated by another woman. It is not marriage that enslaves a woman, but children. If a woman does not have children, she can easily ask for divorce if her husband treats her badly. Having children makes a woman accept difficult situations for the sake of her children.

Having more children means more responsibility, and it may lead to a woman's withdrawal from the labour force, particularly if she does not have domestic help to look after her small children

while she is at work. Working women tend to think twice before having more children. However, there are exceptions to these rules. I have met educated working women from high status families who still insist on having as many children as possible. The social pressures on these women to have more children are very strong, and they may also believe that the use of contraceptives is against Islamic teachings.

Child Care

Although most women interviewed insist that the women's primary duty is motherhood, the availability of domestic help, the spread of television and video, and the fact of salaried employment all tend to reduce the amount of time that women actively spend with their children. It is noteworthy that while not all women interviewed participate in domestic work, they all emphasized that they participated directly in bringing up their children. Whether they really do what they are saying or not, these statements give an indication that they feel that child care is their primary responsibility and they feel pride in doing it. Most Saudi families tend to hire a domestic servant, rather than a proper nanny, because this is less expensive and because they believe that a mother should play a major role in child socialization. Having a domestic servant, not a nanny, means the child's relationship with the domestic help is less likely to be strong and close. On the other hand, children are also less likely to be looked after well,

particularly if the mother is busy with her social visits.

The time that women spend with their children varies from woman to another according to the availability of domestic help, the age of the children, and the women's working hours. Most women interviewed emphasize that work has dramatically reduced their afternoon visits, and they tend to spend all their afternoons with their children. My data show that more important than the number of children is the age of the children; children under the age of two demand more of women's time than older children.

I would like to emphasize again that it is extremely difficult to separate the time that women spend in housework from the time they spend on child care, because usually women spend their afternoons doing both tasks simultaneously. When I ask my respondents "How much time do you spend with your children?" they usually say, "From the time I come back from work till the next morning," or "From the afternoon till they go to bed". But because of the availability of domestic help in most Saudi families, one would not expect that all mothers spend all their afternoons with their children. Despite the difficulty just mentioned, my respondents tried to estimate the time they spend with their children (see Table VII.6).

One must bear in mind that this time is usually interspersed with some domestic tasks, such as cooking for the next day, preparing supper, washing, ironing, ..etc. Most of my respondents emphasized that having domestic help enables them to spend more time with their children. A prominent feature of family life in

Riyadh is coaching children at home. Almost all women coach their children in the afternoon. The same phenomenon has been reported for Jeddah (AlTorki 1986). There is a great emphasis on children's education in Saudi Arabia, particularly in urban areas. Most parents try hard to push their children to get higher education, particularly their boys. According to the rules of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, a child may be failed at any stage of education if he or she does not get a satisfactory mark in the final exams. Because of the spread of videos and televisions in most Saudi families, children nowadays have many distracting activities that divert their attention from studying. Many parents feel that children need extra help at home. Since private tutors are very expensive, most families cannot afford them. Thus, mothers feel that it is their responsibility to coach their children. Coaching children is a very demanding task and it requires time and patience. Twenty out of twenty-five respondents who have children at school stated that they coached their children every day.

While working mothers are at work, they usually have a convenient replacement available to look after the children. twenty-three out of forty-five women who have children under school age leave their children with a domestic, eleven women leave them with their mothers, seven leave them with their mothers-in-law and four with neighbours or nurseries. Nurseries are very few in number in Riyadh. Although, The General Presidency of Girls' Education has assumed the responsibility of opening public nurseries linked to

female schools to help working teachers, there is nonetheless great shortage of nurseries, day care centres or baby sitting facilities. It is noteworthy that most women interviewed emphasized that their mothers played an important role in supporting them. Some mothers not only look after their working daughters' children but also cook their meals as well. One of the women interviewed expressed the importance of a mother's support as follows:

People always say "There is a woman behind every successful man". And I always say "There is a mother behind every successful woman." I wonder what I would have done if I did not have a mother. She is the only one who always helps and supports me. She takes care of my children while I am at work, and she cooks my food if I'm too busy.

Also, the short working hours prevalent in Saudi Arabia have enabled many women to combine their double roles, particularly in the educational sector where the majority of Saudi women are employed. The working day in State schools lasts from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. while in government offices, the workday runs from 8 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m.

It is important to mention that most working women interviewed are satisfied with the time they spend with their children. They do not feel guilty about working, as many studies of working women in Western countries claim. On the contrary, they feel that work improves their relationship with their children. They argue that when women work they become happier and more satisfied with themselves, and this feeling is reflected in their relationship with their children. This point of view is expressed

in a social worker's words:

I think the time I spend with my children is more than enough. Every day I stay with them from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. At the end of the day I have to take an aspirin for headache.

A teacher said:

I am pleased with the time I spend with my children. I try not to sleep in the afternoon so as to spend as long a time with them as possible.

A teacher said:

I think I give my children enough time, because I give them all the time I could give. In the morning I leave them with my mother-in-law, and I spend all the afternoon with them. It is true that I usually do the housework in the afternoon, but I try to involve them with me as much as possible. When I wash I ask them to help me, to keep them beside me, and they enjoy playing with water. When I iron, I put cartoons on the video for them in the same room so I can keep an eye on them while doing my housework.

It is interesting to note that more than half of the women interviewed (34 out of 50) argued that even if they were only housewives, they would not give their children more time and attention than they are now doing. Some of them believe that a woman's attention to her mothering role and the relationship that exists between a mother and a child, should not be measured by the amount of time that a mother spends with her children. It is not the quantity of time but the quality of the relationship which is important. Some of them indicated that, in the past, even though their own mothers did not work, they did not have a close

relationship with them. Their mothers were often so busy with the housework, that they did not have a chance to sit and talk with their children, or perhaps they lacked common topics to talk about. In addition, some of my informants claimed that work improves their relationship with their children. Before they started working they used to get impatient from boredom and isolation but now, going to work makes them happier and more patient with their children. They emphasized that a person who lacks happiness cannot give happiness to the other people surrounding her or him. This point of view was obvious in the words of a social worker who said:

When I am at work, I feel anxious about my children and I would like to spend all my afternoons with them. As I arrive home, my children kiss me and I feel happy. I think it is better to be away from the children for a short period of time everyday and have a close relationship with them, than to be with them all the time, so that they do not feel the importance of your presence. I see many housewives who do not take care of their children or their education. I think being employed makes me more careful and patient with my children than before.

The same point of view was expressed by a teacher who said:

If I were only a housewife, I don't think I would give my children any more time than I do now. When I was just a housewife, I used to get bored from sitting at home all the time, and I used to go out in the afternoon to get away from the children's noise and demands. Nowadays I rarely go out in the afternoon, and I think I give them more time than before.

However, some of the women interviewed (12 out of 50) claimed that they are not satisfied with the time they spend with their children and that if they were housewives only, they would give

their children more time than they are giving now. All these respondents have children under two years of age and feel guilty about leaving their children with domestic help. Some women complained that they tried to get one unpaid year off after their maternity leave, but their requests were not accepted because there were no official replacements available. Because they did not want to lose their jobs, they kept on working even when their children were still very young. A mother of an eighteen month old baby girl said:

I am not happy with the amount of time I spend with my little girl. I wish I could stay with her all the time. It is true that taking care of a small baby is an exhausting task, but she deserves more.

A teacher and a mother of a twelve month old boy said:

I feel guilty about my son. I leave him with my mother and in the afternoon I put him in the waller most of the time until I finish the housework. It is true that he is besides me most of the time, but I am busy doing the housework. I don't have time to play with him. I enjoy his company only at the weekends.

A few women (4 out of 50) have ambiguous feelings towards the time they spend with their children. Sometimes they feel satisfied with the time they spend with their children and sometimes not, depending on their social obligations. If they have many visits to make in the afternoons, they feel guilty about leaving their children alone all day. But if they are not busy in the afternoons, they feel pleased with the time they spend with their

children.

Almost all women interviewed emphasized that they had close relationships with their children. Their children always come to them first if they need any help, or if they have any problems. Women usually make all the decisions concerning their children's hobbies, visits to friends, choosing clothes and schooling. Men, on the other hand, usually choose their children's names, perhaps because fathers feel that children will carry their names and are therefore anxious to choose the name they like. Also, they decide their children's education.

Saudi men in Riyadh still play a marginal role in bringing up their children. The increase of wealth in Saudi society in the last twenty years has made most Saudi men more involved in business activities in an attempt to expand their income as much as possible in a short period of time. Men's increasing interest in their business gives them less time to spend with their families and keeps them away from their homes. However, it is important to mention that education and exposing to other cultures have made many Saudi men more affectionate with their children than before. But they are still distant figures to their children and participate little in their upbringing. Al Suwaigh (1984) has raised the same point in her study of the Eastern region where she finds that mothers play the greater part in socialization.

The findings in this study indicated that despite the transition to the nuclear family, and the anticipation of greater interaction between the family members, mothers continue to be the most important socialization agent. Father's contribution was seen as very modest or

sometimes negligible (Al Suwaigh 1984: 234)

Some of my respondents complained that their husbands were too busy with their businesses and friends and that they do not have time to see their children enough, or to participate in their socialization. One of my respondents, whose husband is a businessman, complained of her husband's heavy involvement in his work as follows:

My husband is a very practical man; he gives all his time to his work. I think he does not think of his children. He depends on me for everything concerning our home and children. He does not know how to strike a balance between his work and his family. Sometimes I don't see him for two or three days because he goes to work in the morning and he is invited for lunch and he does not come back until late at night. I miss the warmth of the family. We can rarely sit together as a family, talking and laughing, without my husband reading his newspapers. My children look upon their father as a guest, who may leave at any moment. Sometimes I get bored with this way of life, and if I complain, I am always told, "Thank God (ihmedi rabek) you have everything you want. Your husband is a good man. You have your home and you have your children. What else do you want?"

Looking at these cases, one can say that Saudi working women use different strategies to organize their time between domestic tasks and paid work by hiring domestic help, seeking support from their mothers or mothers-in-law, living in an extended family households, cutting down leisure activities and social visits during the week, and by giving up over-time jobs to have more time to fulfill their familial duties.

Household Budgeting

Because of the ideology of women's dependence, it is always assumed that a man should manage the financial affairs of the family. A man's ability to maintain his family financially is very closely related to his masculinity, as I have mentioned in Chapter Five. Thus, many Saudi men feel threatened by the idea of women undertaking paid work. For them, their wives' economic independence may affect their superiority in the family.

Employed women's control over their salaries is quite varied. Nine out of fifty respondents hand all of their salaries over to their husbands. These women stated that their husbands do not feel comfortable with the idea of their wives' financial independence - they like to feel that their wives are still dependent on them. To avoid any problems, these wives give all their salaries to their husbands. Twelve out of fifty respondents indicated that both husband and wife pool their salaries and spend the money together and that, if they saved any money, they usually put it in the husband's account. Twenty-nine out of fifty respondents stated that they maintain control over their own salaries, and that they decide how to spend their own earnings. Six out of the twenty-nine respondents who said that they keep their salaries for themselves did not contribute to any family expenses. They spent all their salaries on clothes and jewellery. All these women are from rich families and their husbands do not need their

financial assistance.

Most Saudi men insist on controlling the financial matters of the household. Because they contributed more financially to their families than their wives, most family property is held by men. "Traditionally", the family budget is managed by men. But with the increasing number of women entering the labour force, more women have started to control the household money. Nineteen out of fifty respondents stated that their husbands controlled the family budget. Eleven out of fifty respondents said they shared the responsibility of decision-making, but the final decision was usually taken by their husbands. Seventeen out of fifty respondents said they manage day-to-day expenses. Their husbands usually give them a certain amount of their salaries and they organize the household expenditure. Three out of fifty respondents, who were living in extended families, said that the eldest man in their families-in-laws controlled the family's financial affairs.

The influx of wealth has increased the cost of living in Saudi Arabia. At the same it has led to increasing stress on the desirability on necessity of personal and family consumption. Women's salaries have therefore become important to fulfill the increasing demands of the family on the one hand, and to keep the standard of living of the family in the same level with other families. Most working women interviewed tend to spend all their salaries on day-to-day family needs. Only eighteen out of fifty women interviewed stated that they saved some of their salaries in

a bank account or bought shares. It is interesting to mention that although most women interviewed (44 out of 50) respondents stated that they do participate in family expenses, in building the family house, in paying children's school fees, in paying the domestic helpers' salary, in holiday expenses, in buying children's clothes and in buying new furniture, these women still feel that their salaries are of secondary importance to their husbands' salary.

Out of thirty-five respondents who have domestic servants, only in nine families did the husband pay the servant's salary; in fifteen families the wife pays the salary. These respondents indicated that their husbands believed that since housework is a woman's responsibility, a woman who seeks paid work should pay for her domestic replacement. Eleven out of fifty women claimed that they shared the domestic help's salary with their husbands.

Seven out of fifty women interviewed indicated that they bear all the family expenses. In three of these cases, their husbands are not working. In the fourth case, the husband is saving his salary to build a house and the wife provides the family needs. The fifth said that because her husband is studying, his university grant is just enough for his pocket money. Two other women said their husbands' salaries are low and they have many hire purchase installments to meet.

Twelve out of the fifty women interviewed, who have larger salaries than of their husbands, said that their husbands' salaries were not enough for family maintenance. They argued that their own salaries make a significant contribution to fulfilling family

needs. Three women interviewed pay the rent. Nine out of fifty women interviewed stated that, in addition to their contribution to the family budget, they saved the rest of their salaries in their husbands' account. Eight out of fifty women interviewed emphasized that they contributed financially with their husbands to build their houses, which are owned by the husbands only. Ten out of fifty respondents indicated that they support their mothers financially.

Because of sex segregation rules and male greater access to public life, men are usually the ones who shop for daily family needs. It is easier for men to do family shopping from the old market. Only nine of my respondents indicated that they did the shopping with their drivers. My data also show that men have more power in decisions to move house, in choosing furniture, in deciding to buy a new car and in choosing the holiday. Women have more power in buying domestic equipment, in deciding family daily needs and in choosing family meals.

My data indicate that women with high family incomes usually have more power in family decision-making than women with low family incomes. It is not because women from rich families work harder that they get this power, but because wealthy men do not have time to bother themselves about these small things. Thus, men usually give their wives the responsibility for domestic affairs, to give themselves more time for their own business. Some housewives from rich families I interviewed in Riyadh, stated that they take a full responsibility for their family affairs. They are the ones

who buy their family shopping, they choose the furniture, they buy their children's clothes, and they even buy their husbands' clothes.

Women's work gives them a feeling of independence and security. Thirty-four out of fifty women interviewed stated that if they were not working, they would not spend the same amount as they do now. Some of them stated that their husbands' incomes are not adequate to meet all their families' and their own expenses. Others claimed that they would be embarrassed to ask their husbands to buy them anything they need. Women who started work before marriage are used to being financially independent; thus, they would find it difficult to be dependent on their husbands to support them if they left work. A doctor said:

Since my university years, I have been used to being financially independent. I provided for all my needs, and even my father has never helped me in my expenses. I have never asked my husband to buy me anything for my personal use. If I stop working, I'll find it very difficult to ask my husband to buy me all that I need.

Some working women indicated that being financially independent mean that they spend more money than before. They like to buy everything that they want, or their children want. A deputy headmistress said:

I think if I were not working, I would not spend the same amount. Being financially independent makes me feel free to buy whatever I want according to my means. But if I were not working, I would feel embarrassed to ask my husband to buy me an evening dress for S.R.2,000. I'd feel afraid he might say, "It is expensive; I cannot buy it". Now, although my husband is well off financially, I still participate in the family budget.

It is important to mention that fourteen out of fifty women interviewed stated that even if they were not working, they would have the same expenses. They argued that working did not increase the amount of money they spend on themselves. They are always careful in their financial matters, and whether they are working or not, they would have the same requirements. Only one woman out of fifty respondents argued that if she were not working, she would spend more than now. She explained that working reduced her personal expenses because she no longer has the same social obligations and visits that she used to have when she was just a housewife. If she stopped working, she would have more visits and need more expensive dresses to attend these social obligations.

Government policy in Saudi Arabia assumes that only men should be heads of families and aims to strengthen the husband's power within the family. For example, the government's Real Estate Development Fund gives men, widows and divorced women the right to have a housing loan to build a new house but refuses to grant such loans to married women. Many women I interviewed feel that such a law increases men's power over women. Some women were obliged to give their own lot, which they had bought with their own salaries, to their husbands to get the government loans. This idea is expressed in a teacher's words:

I have bought a lot with my own savings and, because the Government does not give married women housing loans, I transferred the land to my husband's name to benefit from R.E.D.F. My father was very upset and he said to me: "Are you stupid, putting your life in your husband's hands? Tomorrow he will get married and throw you out in the street. This is your work and your effort. Why do you give it to another person?" But I told him, "My husband is a religious man, and one should not fear a man who fears God."

Although most women interviewed indicated that financial matters are a very sensitive issue, and they try hard not to

make their husbands feel resentment at their financial independence, my data show that women's salaries may sometimes give them more power in their families. Six out of twelve of my respondents who have higher salaries than their husbands control their family budget. They are the ones who bought the furniture and they are the ones who rented their houses. They usually decide family daily needs and give the list to their husbands with the money to buy them. On the other hand, four of the twelve women who have higher salaries than their husbands stated that they hand all their salaries to their husbands, who managed the family budget. Two out of these twelve women indicated that they shared the responsibility of making decisions. It is clear, therefore, that greater access to employment and income is no necessary guarantee of increased autonomy or decision making power in family affairs.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to explain women's reproductive role in the family. It argues that the influx of wealth in Saudi society has greatly changed the function of the family. While the family was a production and a consumption unit in pre-oil society, it is only a consumption unit today. While all family members-men, women and children, contributed to family subsistence in pre-oil society, today men alone are regarded as responsible for family support.

Increased affluence has led to an expansion in the use of domestic servants among a large number of families. Having domestic help has greatly reduced women's housework. Thus, not all Saudi working women face the same physical constraints in their attempts to combine their double roles. The amount of time that working women spend in housework varies dramatically from one woman to another, according to their family wealth. While women from rich families do not participate in any housework, women from low-income families do all the housework single-handed.

The discrepancy between what a housewife should do and what she is actually doing creates contradictory images of the housewife role in present day Saudi society. Working women find themselves in a contradictory situation. On the one hand, they still regard themselves as housewives, and on the other, they keep on working and are very satisfied with their work.

My data emphasize that women's economic independence plays some role in determining a woman's position in the family. Women who have higher salaries than their husbands have rather more chance to participate in family decision-making than women with lower salaries, however, higher salaries do not always ensure greater power.

A distinctive feature of this study in comparison with others is that for many women physical pressure on working women in their two roles has become less significant. Nevertheless, not all Saudi women face the problem of the double day as do

women in the West, pressure on working women remains at the ideological level. Although the actual amount of domestic work has thus decreased for some women, the ideology of domestic roles and women's social values remains much the same. Women's labour in the family is replaced with the labour of other women, servants or their mothers or mothers-in-law. This point will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, which considers the extent to which working women succeed in combining their double roles, and the different material and ideological factors that help them to achieve their goals.

Table VII.1
The Distribution of Domestic Servants Among
Women Interviewed.

None	One	Two	Three	Four	Total
15	24	6	3	2	50

Table VII.2
The Relationship between Family Income and the Number
of Domestic Servants

Family Income (Thousand Riyal)	Nom. of Domestic Servants					Total
	none	one	Two	Three	Four	
0-10	10	1	0	0	0	11
11-20	3	14	1	1	0	19
21-30	2	8	4	2	0	16
31-40	0	0	0	0	1	1
41-50	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not known	0	1	1	0	1	3
Total	15	24	6	3	2	50

Table VII.3
The Distribution of House' Size among Respondents
The Size of the House

	Respondents
2-4 rooms	12
5-7 rooms	20
8-10 rooms	14
11-14 rooms	4
Total	50

Table VII.4
The Relationship between the Number of Children and
the Number of Domestic Servants in the Household.

Number of Children	Number of Domestic Servants				
	none	one	two	three	four
2	8	13	3	1	0
4	6	10	2	2	1
6	1	1	1	0	1
Total	15	24	6	3	2

Table VII.5
The Relationship between having Domestic Servant
and the Time Women Spend in Housework.

Having domestic help	0	occasionally	0-2	2-4	4-6	6-8
No domestic help.	0	0	0	5	5	5
With domestic help	6	2	15	12	0	0

Table VII.6
The Time that Respondents Spend with their Children

Hours	Respondents
0-2	9
2-4	23
4-6	13
6-8	5
Total	50

Table VII.7
Husband/Wife Involvement in their Children's
Decisions.

Decision concerning	Fathers	Mothers	Sharing	kin/others
Children's name	18	10	18	4
Children's toys	5	25	18	1
Children's clothes	3	38	8	1
Children's visits to friends(1)	1	16	6	0
Children's hobbies(2)	5	13	7	0
Children's schools(3)	4	6	12	0

(1) Their children are too young to visit their friends.

(2) Their children are too young to have hobbies.

(3) They chose the nearest school to their homes.

Table VII.8

Participation of Husband and Wife in Family Budget.

Who make decision in these matters?	Husband	Wife	Sharing	Other
Buying domestic equipment	3	34	10	3
Choosing furniture	29	8	12	1
Moving house	23	7	20	0
Change husband's job	49	0	1	0
Women's going to work	3	32	15	0
Family holiday	24	6	20	0
Determining daily meals	0	31	11	8
Buying family shopping	19	9	7	15
Controlling finance	19	17	11	3
Buying a new car	38	0	12	0
Determining daily needs	1	27	14	8

Chapter VIII

Women's Double Roles

In the previous chapters I argued that the availability of domestic servants in Saudi society, mothers' domestic support of their working daughters, the development and availability of domestic technology and the continued existence of the extended family have all combined to decrease dramatically the amount of time that women spend in domestic tasks. Most studies of working women in developing and developed countries focus on the material constraints of women in paid work, and the great difficulties they face in their double day. They argue that the phenomenon of "double day" is principally a problem of time and the sheer amount of work women have to perform in a short period of time.

This chapter aims to investigate women's double roles in Saudi Arabia. If working women manage to solve the problem of the "double day" by hiring domestic servants or by purchasing technological appliances, does this mean that the role conflict supposedly experienced by women workers is no longer a significant problem? Is the oppressive nature of the "double day", as analysed by Western feminist sociologists, inappropriate in the case of Saudi women's experience? If most working women in Riyadh do not face the same material constraints that working women face in other

countries, why is women's participation in the labour force still very low? If wealth is the main factor that lessens women's housework, does this mean that only wealthy women can manage their double roles successfully? What are the main factors that help some working women and hinder others in combining their two roles with ease?

Work and the Division of Labour in the Family

In the West it has been found that women generally attempt to lessen their dual work load by encouraging their husbands' participation in domestic tasks. Rapoport and Rapoport (1980) in their study of "dual career" families, and Young and Willmot (1984) in their study of "symmetrical families", argue that women's work has affected the division of labour in the family. Both husbands and wives do work inside and outside the domestic sphere. Husbands of working wives tend to do more housework than before. Other feminist sociologists (Boulding 1976; Pollert 1981; Buvinic 1983; Westwood 1984) argue that when women enter the labour force, they are the only ones who suffer from burden of the "double day. To what extent are these theories applicable to women in Riyadh? Does women's work affect the sexual division of labour within the family? How do men and women negotiate their sex roles in the family?

Most Saudi men take responsibility for certain "masculine" tasks such as family shopping and household repairs. They are

usually reluctant to participate in any other domestic tasks. Thirty-seven out of fifty of the women interviewed indicated that their husbands do not participate in any housework. Most Saudi men tend to claim that it is an honour for a woman to be a housewife and to do the housework. However, when you ask them "Why don't share this honour? They would say, "Because we do not know" or "Because it is not appropriate for us to do so". As we saw in the last chapter, whether women have domestic help or not, most Saudi men were unwilling to help their wives in housework. Some men expect their wives to be at their service all the time. If they want to drink a glass of water, they expect their wives to bring it to them. When my respondents were asked whether their husbands participated in housework, many of them replied, "It is good if they can serve themselves". A teacher said:

No, my husband does not help in any housework, but sometimes he serves himself. If he is thirsty and I'm busy, he serves himself. He is better than my colleagues' husbands who want their wives to do everything for them. My husband is helpful; if he wants tea or coffee and he knows that I have other things to do, he will help himself.

Ten out fifty of my respondents stated that their husbands sometimes helped in Hoovering or setting the table or making tea or coffee or ironing their own clothes. Some respondents indicated that their husbands used to help them when they were abroad but stopped when they returned to Riyadh. Only three of the women interviewed claimed that their husbands help in all the tasks of housework if they have time.

Women's Paid Employment and its Impact on the Family

My respondents gave different explanations regarding the impact of their work on their families. Nineteen of the women interviewed indicated that their work had neither positive nor negative effects on their family life. They emphasized that women are still responsible for domestic affairs, either by themselves or by hiring domestic help. The only change is that work makes their daily schedule busier than before.

Twenty-two out of fifty of my respondents argued that work has positive effects on a woman's familial role. Work makes women happier and this happiness is reflected in their relations within their own families. Those women believe that work makes them more realistic in dealing with their familial problems. They stated that before they started working, their lives and thoughts were centred only around their families. When they faced any minor problem, they used to exaggerate its significance. Since being employed, meeting other women and hearing about their different problems, they realized that their problems were no different from other women's problems. A teacher said:

I think a working woman is happier. She meets people every day. She is more exposed to the outside world. A housewife is a more self-centred person. If she has a small dispute with her husband, she thinks that this is the end of the world because she is not aware of other people's problems. A working woman has the chance to meet other women and to get more experience in life. She can handle her marital affairs more efficiently than before.

Psychologically, working women feel that their work gives them some power in their families; it improves their status in their family and strengthens their marital relationships. Many women interviewed stated that their husbands respected them more since they started working and that work created more topics to talk about with their husbands. A teacher said:

Wallahi, I think a working woman is happier. A housewife has certain duties to do every day, her social relations are very limited. She devotes all her life to her husband and children. Thus, her husband can easily dominate her. But a working woman has more chance to meet other people, to get a higher position, to get more experience and skills than a housewife. Work improves my personality and gives me higher status in my family.

Four of the women interviewed indicated that while work may have little effect on women's familial role, it nevertheless has negative effects on working women themselves. They claimed that working women do not have enough time to rest, sleep, visit, or to look after themselves. The daily routine of women in waged employment is far busier than that of non-waged women. More of the women who mentioned this point have domestic help and they have small children under the age of five, which makes their schedule very intensive. A social worker and a mother of three children said:

I think a housewife is happier; she does not have anything to keep her busy away from her family and children. She can do the housework whenever she wants to. A working woman is always busy; she does not have any spare time to enjoy her life or to take care of

herself.

A teacher and a mother of three children said:

I think a housewife is happier; working women always feel tired from their double day. But housewives have one role to do, and some housewives have servants to do the housework for them. I envy these women; they can have enough rest.

Five of my respondents claimed that work may have negative effects on children. Work reduces the amount of time that working women spend with their children and makes women more dependent on domestic help to look after the children while they are at work.

Generally speaking, most working women feel that work has positive effects on their familial role. First of all, they claimed that work makes them happy and this happiness is reflected on their families. Second, they feel that work strengthens their marital relationship. Third, although some working women feel guilty about leaving their small children at home, most women feel that work improves their relationship with their children. Finally, one can say that women's multiple roles create satisfaction in some aspects of women's lives and conflict in others. On the one hand, work has some positive effects on women's personal satisfaction and their self-esteem. On the other, it has negative effects by creating greater pressures of time, a more complex schedule and reduced opportunities for personal leisure.

Work and Women's Conceptions of their Roles in the Family

A large part of women's ability to combine their double roles is rooted in their conception of their domestic role and their unquestioned belief about the ways in which men and women should behave. Gender identity plays an important part in enforcing husband's and wife's behaviour. Hiller and Philliber (1982: 55) define gender identity as "the degree to which a man or a woman incorporates traditional masculine or feminine role definitions, including dominant and subordinate statuses into his/her own self concept".

Although, the number of women entering the labour force is increasing, women still regard themselves as housewives in the first place. When I asked my respondents how they liked to be thought of by others, I found out that twelve out of fifty respondents chose to be known as housewives. Those women believe that a woman's primary role in life is to be a mother and housewife, no matter what level of education or employment she has. As I have mentioned before, according to Saudi norms motherhood and housewifery are closely interrelated. A secretary at a university said:

I would rather be known as a housewife. God creates us to be mothers and housewives. Even when a woman goes to work, her primary role in life is to be a housewife. I consider the house is a mirror of a woman's personality and her tidiness.

A bank teller said:

I always like to be known as a housewife. I feel happy when people appreciate my food and say that I am a good

housewife. I don't like to be known as a working woman. Even if God wishes and I stay in my work for twenty years, I will still be proud to be known as a housewife.

Some respondents indicated that they did not like to be known as working women because people always feel alienated from working women and try to maintain their distance from them. These respondents fear that working women are regarded as selfish, neglectful, and very proud of themselves. These women feel that people become more friendly towards them if they identify them as housewives only. A university teacher said:

I like to be known as a housewife. I feel closer to people as a housewife. When people know that I am a working woman, they try to be antagonistic. Even at parties, I don't like people to feel that I am a working woman. I feel more at ease as a housewife.

Because woman's work is something new, the concept of a "career" for women is not appreciated in Saudi society. Thus only a small number of women I interviewed (10 out of 50) saw their principle identity as a worker. These women feel more proud of their paid work; they believe that their salaried work is more intellectual and productive than domestic work. They feel that being employed improves their personality and strengthens their status in the society. A bank teller said:

I would rather be known as a working woman, that way I feel that I have a value. I am a productive woman and I do something important. I don't like to be treated as a rabbit who has nothing to do except produce children and wait for my husband when he comes back at night.

A teacher said:

I feel more proud to be known as a working woman. Work improves your status in the family. It strenghtens your personality. Without work you feel something is missing.

Half of the women interviewed indicated that they saw themselves as working housewives. They claimed that working does not mean that they are not housewives. They are still undertaking the same household responsibilites as mothers and housewives. Nothing has changed in their range of domestic tasks. The only change is that they postpone their housework until the afternoon. Most of my respondents indicated that they are always treated as housewives. Their husbands, their families and their in-laws never consider their careers. A woman's career is something secondary to her domestic responsibilities. No excuses could be given for not doing domestic work. So, they prefer to be known as working housewives, because this is what they really are. A businesswoman said:

I like to be known as a housewife and a working woman; having a job does not mean that I am not a housewife. It is true that I don't cook but when I have a party, I like to cook and take care of everything myself.

A social worker said:

When my husband went to get me a new passport, I asked him to list my occupation as "working woman". But the official said to my husband, "It is better for you to write "housewife" because she is firstly and finally a housewife." So he identified me as a housewife. But actually I like people to think of me as a working

housewife.

Two of my respondents saw motherhood as their primary identity. They felt motherhood was more important and more valued than either employment or housewifery. They felt that becoming a mother was the most important event in their lives. Only one of my respondents indicated that she likes to be known as a woman with a good personality. She claims that personality is the most important thing in the individual, no matter what his or her job is.

I don't like people to know me as a doctor or a housewife. I like them to know me as someone with a nice personality. When I first joined a women's association, I did not tell anybody that I was a doctor. Later on they knew, they were surprised. They asked why I did not tell them since I should be proud of being a doctor. But I told them that I wanted people to know me as I was, not according to my diploma.

Women's Attitudes Towards Husbands' Domesticity

The domesticity of husbands is an issue which is very closely related to feminine/masculine role behaviour. The definition of what is male and what is female varies greatly from one culture to another. Since there is a strict division of labour between the sexes in Saudi families, husbands' "domestication" is considered contrary to the Saudi image of manhood. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, according to Saudi norms, a woman is responsible for domestic work; housework is feminine work and it is not appropriate for a man to indulge in these tasks. A good housewife is the one who

dedicates herself to serving her husband and to fulfilling her family needs. Many of the working women interviewed opposed the idea of husbands' domesticity. They considered it a threat to masculinity.

Anker and Hein (1986) have indicated that the degree of sharing within the home, in some developing countries, depends on the degree of equality between spouses' salaries. According to these authors when a husband's income is greater than his wife's, which makes it more crucial for the family maintenance, the woman usually performs the extra labour of domestic work. However, this argument is not applicable in Saudi society. Spouses' salaries have nothing to do with the sexual division of labour within the family. Housework is woman's work, whether she has a lower or a higher salary than her husband. In contrast, sometimes the husband's low income makes him more aware of his wife's power, and he may try to be more strict in not participating in housework so as to emphasize his male supremacy within the family. The main factor that determines the sexual division of labour in the family has less to do with financial status and more to do with the degree to which husband and wife have incorporated traditional gender roles into their identity. Twenty out of fifty women interviewed are totally against the idea of husbands' domesticity. They believe that domestic work is feminine work, and it is not appropriate for a man. Some of them took the question as a joke and did not give it any attention; some of them severely rejected it because they felt that it undermined their

image of a "man". A teacher said:

A man is a man. I don't agree with the idea of men doing housework; I don't think it is appropriate for a man to cook or clean. These are woman's tasks. I definitely would not like to see my husband chopping onions or washing dishes; it's not appropriate for him to do so. I think I would not respect a man who does such things.

Every society has a certain stereotype of appropriate male/female behaviour. There is an interrelationship between the models of both sexes and the reality. We usually do what we think is appropriate, and what is appropriate is usually derived from our social milieu. This interrelationship between the ideal model and reality is reflected in the words of a secretary at university who said:

No, I don't support this idea because it is a woman's responsibility to do the housework. I have never seen a man cooking or cleaning. It is demeaning for a man to do so. I think if a working woman cannot manage, it is better for her to leave her work and stay at home than to ask her husband to do the housework.

A teacher said:

I don't know what kind of housework men can do. Since I have never seen my father or brothers doing any housework, I don't know what are the suitable tasks for men to perform. I think if my husband takes care of the children, it will be kind of him.

It is interesting to find out that the Saudi women's conception of their roles in the family is so strong that many women accept male supremacy as something genetically determined. Many Saudi women conceive of men's superiority as natural.

Although some of them felt a sense of rebellion against this notion, they still submit to it, and they cannot accept the idea of changing it. Many Saudi working women find themselves in a contradictory situation. They like to feel that their husbands are giving them their full moral and material support, just as they themselves do for their families, but they still find it difficult to accept the idea of husband's domesticity. Many Saudi women feel that husbands' domesticity may lead to men losing respect. As the head of the family, men are always accorded great respect by all members of the family; thus, their participation in domestic work is seen to conflict with their image in the family. A social worker said:

I don't like to see my husband doing housework although it sometimes upsets me when I see him sleeping in the air conditioning while I am tired from housework. But still I don't like him to Hoover or mop the floor. I think he will lose my respect if he does so, but he can water the garden.

A teacher said:

I can't imagine my husband cleaning or Hoovering or washing up. I think it is not suitable for a man to do so; it is a woman's duty. But I think my husband can help in setting the table or taking care of the children if I am not feeling well.

However, eleven out of fifty respondents completely supported the idea of husbands' domesticity. They emphasized that men can share all domestic tasks in the same way that women should be able to work in all paid jobs as men do.

Six out of the fifty respondents believed that men can "help" in housework but only in certain tasks such as taking care of children if the mother is busy. It is noteworthy that most women used the word "help" or "share", because they consider housework is essentially woman's work. Thus, according to these women, men can take part in some tasks, and they chose clean tasks for men to do such as cooking or tidying up.

Nine out fifty respondents argued that a man can help his wife in any domestic work, if he likes. It should not be his duty, because housework is a woman's responsibility in the first place. A teacher at university:

I agree with this idea (that men could help around the house) but it is difficult for me to ask for help. He should take the initiative and offer; otherwise I will not demand his help.

Four of my respondents emphasized that if a husband forces his wife to work and participate in earning income for the family, a woman has the right to ask for his help in domestic work. As I have mentioned before, according to the sexual division of labour in the Saudi family, a man should bear the responsibility for the financial affairs. He should work to support his wife. Thus, if a husband needs his wife to help him financially, he should help her domestically. However, since many Saudi men do not encourage their wives to work, and the decision to go to work is usually taken by the woman, many Saudi women feel that they have no right to ask for their husbands' help in housework. A teacher said:

I think if a husband asks his wife to work to help him financially, she could ask him to help her in domestic work. But if he does not want her to work, she has no right to ask his help.

Judging from my informants' statements, it is apparent that many of them do not consider a woman's salaried work to be a duty for a woman in the same way as it is for a man. Women's paid work is not regarded as "natural" as is their domestic work. Women's paid employment is a matter of choice. Thus, many working women feel that, even if they face many difficulties in their double roles, they have no right to complain because they are the ones who chose to work.

From the previous cases, it is clear that some women are more flexible in their attitudes to sex roles in the family than others. The question that arises here is, why this should be so? Is it the effect of religion, or of education or of travelling abroad? Because the interpretation of Islam in Saudi society strengthens sexism and emphasizes that only women should be responsible for domestic affairs, one would assume that the more religious a woman is, the more she will be against the idea of men's domesticity. My data show that this argument is not always true. Women tend to interpret Islam according to their own interests. Some working women who consider themselves to be orthodox Muslims and who, for example, refused to hire a domestic to help in housework because they believed that it is against Islamic teachings to have a strange woman in the presence of their husbands all the time)

support the idea of husbands' domesticity. They back up their point of view with the idea that the prophet Mohammed himself used to help his wives in domestic chores.

Also, one would expect that the more women travel abroad the more they would support the idea of husbands' domesticity, and vice versa, the less women travel abroad, the more they might have strict views against their husband engaging in domestic work. But nor does this argument always appear to be true. During my interviews with working women, I met some women who had lived for some time in the U.S.A and had obtained a higher education there. But still their gender identity was so strong that they firmly opposed the idea of their husbands participating in domestic work. They consider it demeaning for a man to do the housework. On the other hand, I was surprised to meet some working women who have never been abroad and have only a secondary level of education, who completely supported the idea of a husband's participation in domestic work. They declared their wish that their husbands would be more flexible towards sex roles in the family.

Throughout my interviews with my fifty respondents, I found that more important than the degree of women's education is the subject speciality of this education. Women who had studied scientific subjects abroad are usually less exposed to women's movements in the West. Thus, they tend to have less flexible attitudes in their sex roles than women who studied social sciences.

One of the interesting points that some of my respondents

raised in the course of our discussions is that they feel some discomfort about their economic independence. Because they were brought up to believe that men should be the chief providers of the family, they feel unhappy with their own autonomy. They emphasized that although they still need their husbands for social and psychological reasons, they do not need them financially. This point of view is represented in the words of a social worker who said:

One of the important points that annoys me about work is that I don't really feel that I need my husband financially. I do really need his company, but I don't feel that he is supporting me. I have the same salary as he does. This feeling has annoyed me because I always like to feel protected and supported. So I insist on letting my husband buy me my necessities while I buy my children's necessities.

But when I discussed the same point with other working women, I found out that this attitude is not common among all my respondents. The majority of my respondents emphasized that a woman's salary does not affect the husband/ wife relationship. Since Saudi society is a male-dominated society, woman's education and employment never affects women's need of a man. Another social worker said:

A woman in our society cannot live without a man. She will not be happy. Money is not everything for women. I pay most of my family expenses, and I manage all the household affairs, but nevertheless I cannot imagine that I could live without my husband. A man's presence is very important for a woman and her children. A woman cannot live happily without a man. I have never let my husband feel that I can live without him. I know that I can support myself financially. But still I feel that a

man is very important to a woman. Financial matters are very sensitive issues. Working women should not let their husbands feel that they could live without them.

A teacher said:

My salary has never affected my relationship with my husband. I can live without my salary, but I cannot live without my husband. My husband is the most important thing in my life. Money is not everything for a woman, particularly in our society where a woman can do nothing without a man.

I have noticed that most women who mentioned the previous point about their autonomy, have more power in family affairs than their husbands, which means that it is not only their salaries that create this problem but also their feeling of power which comes into conflict with their attitudes towards male/female relationships.

Role Co flict

Because women's education and women's salaried employment have expanded in a short period of time in comparison to other countries, Saudi women face rather unique forms of role conflict. As an educated person, a Saudi woman assumes that marriage is a compact between two persons; she expects to be a partner and to participate in family decision making. But as a "woman" in Saudi society, she is expected to subjugate her personality and education

and to be obedient and submissive. Also, educated women feel another conflict, either to stay at home and have up to ten children as most women in the older generation have done, or to start a career and have a small number of children.

In addition, working women face another dilemma. Because of the strong public emphasis on women's domestic role and proper mode of behaviour, women tend to stress that their home-making comes first. But in their actual behaviour women enjoy their work and are attached to it. The satisfaction they get from their work makes it difficult for them to relinquish their job easily. Work gives women satisfaction, self-esteem and financial independence which their domestic role fails to provide. Thus, working women struggle to make the balance between these two roles. They do not like to sacrifice one role for the sake of the other.

Being financially independent makes women feel that they should have a higher status than before, but many Saudi men feel threatened by women's independence because they conceive of their male supremacy as something hereditary and immutable. Educated men face the same dilemma. Being educated and travelling abroad makes them aware of the importance of education for women. But at the same time, they feel afraid that educated women might be difficult to dominate and control. If he chooses to marry an educated woman, a Saudi man expects her to be educated in her behaviour, to be modernized in her appearance, but to be obedient in her attitudes. He does not expect her to argue with him or to participate in family decisions. So far, many Saudi men do not know how to deal

with educated women. Even at the work place where women expect to be equal, many educated men still deny this right to women.

The Factors that Enable Women to Combine their Double Roles

Most studies of working women in the West and in poor developing countries argue that material constraints are the most significant problems that working women face. A working woman must spend a large amount of her time in her paid job and spend the rest of her day in domestic work. Working women are expected to fit in a heavy load of tasks in a short period of time. Organizing these conflicting demands on their time is regarded as problematic by many working women.

It is important to explore how Saudi working women conceive of their double day, and to determine whether they find it difficult or easy to maintain their two responsibilities. Twenty-nine out of fifty women interviewed think that it is easy for working women to combine their two roles. Because of the various factors that I have mentioned in the last chapter, in particular the use of domestic help, many Saudi working women do not find it difficult to combine paid work with their familial responsibilities. Six of the women interviewed claimed that coping with the "double day", although it may cause them difficulties, is by no means impossible. In their view, a woman's ability to combine her double roles depends on two main factors: the women's strong will and the extent to which her social surroundings are supportive. However, fifteen

of my respondents stated that it is very difficult for working women to manage their roles. They argued that while a housewife has one role to perform, a working woman has two conflicting roles - their paid work and their domestic role. Both roles are demanding and need a lot of women's time, patience, and energy.

It is interesting to note that only fifteen of my respondents complained explicitly about their double roles. Most working women I interviewed tried to emphasize that they were managing their two duties very smoothly and easily. It is a reflection of their gender identity to show that they are capable. For them a "good" housewife should know how to handle her domestic affairs effectively. But one can see under the surface the contradictory situation that working women face in reconciling their paid work with their familial duties.

A-Material/ Organizational Factors

My respondents mentioned various factors that enable working women to reconcile their domestic responsibilities with their paid jobs. I discuss these factors in the order of their importance to the women interviewed.

1- Possibility of substituting her own domestic labour: Having a convenient replacement at home to look after the children while working mothers are at work is assumed to be a crucial factor.

Twenty-two of the women interviewed mentioned that the availability of servants is a major facilitating factor for a woman in reducing the amount of time a woman spends on housework. Many of them mentioned that having a domestic servant encouraged them to go to work. Since domestic servants perform a large part of the housework, women have more time to spend either in visiting and shopping or in paid work.

2- Age of children, twenty respondents out of fifty indicated that having small children under the age of two years is a major source of difficulty for a working woman in managing her double day. The age of children is more important than the number of children in this regard. The younger the children the more difficulties a woman faces.

3- Working hours in employment: twelve of my respondents emphasized that the longer the hours a woman spends at work, the greater the strain she faces. My data show that women working at school find it easier to combine their double roles than doctors or nurses or bank tellers because the last three occupations require a woman to work for longer hours and sometimes for two shifts. Three doctors, out of four female doctors interviewed, indicated that they were obliged by their families to give up the medical practice allowance to reduce their working hours. Working for two shifts a day was too much for them as mothers of small children.

4- Organization of the daily schedule: eleven out of fifty respondents indicated that effective organization of time is a key factor that enables women to combine waged and domestic work

successfully. They believe that working women need to organize their time very well between their familial obligations and their paid work. They should not give one side more than the other. Working women should cut down their visiting or parties in the middle of the week, and they should give up sleeping in the afternoon. They mentioned that visiting or having guests in the middle of the week disrupts the daily routine.

5- Transportation: ten out of fifty women interviewed stated that the restrictions on women's movements by not allowing women to drive their own cars constitutes a major problem for working women and hinders them from working in any available job. Women are always at the mercy of their male kin to drive them between home and work.

6- The availability of nurseries or baby sitting systems: eight out of fifty women interviewed emphasized that since not all families can afford to have a domestic servant to look after their children while they are at work, nurseries, child care centres and kindergartens are very important in facilitating working women's tasks. In one of the schools I visited, there was a nursery for teachers' children. Most teachers in that school felt more comfortable since they could bring their children with them to the nursery and look after them at coffee or break time.

7- Number of children : eight of my respondents indicated that the fewer children women have, the easier it is for them to combine their paid work with their domestic work. These women stated that having many children restricted women's full participation in the

labour force.

8- Determination to succeed: three out fifty women interviewed indicated that a woman can succeed in her job if she has enough will power to achieve her goal. They believe that if a woman is patient and determined, she will succeed in combining her double roles.

Throughout my interviews two important points could be distinguished. First, most working women conceive of the problem of the double day from an individual point of view. They assume that the problem of the double day encountered by working women is due to their lack of determination, patience, and organization. They do not look upon this problem as a social problem. Second, most working women assume that material factors such as the shortage of domestic replacements, the baby sitting system, and organization of time are responsible for causing women's tension and constraints in their double day. But is it true that all the problems of working women will be solved by supplying a convenient replacement for their domestic work? My data show that however important material problems are, they are not the only challenges that working women have to confront. Indeed, cultural and attitudinal factors are also significant obstacles for working women in Saudi Arabia.

B- Cultural and Attitudinal Factors

In the last twenty-five years, Saudi women have experienced many changes in the material, educational, and occupational spheres of their lives, and these changes have moved at a faster pace than have changes in the values and attitudes affecting sex roles in the family. Women still look upon themselves as housewives in the first place; people still insist that a woman's primary role in life is to be a mother and a housewife. Husbands still insist that domestic work is a woman's responsibility only.

Since having a domestic servant plays an important role in reducing women's domestic work, one might assume that the higher the family status, the more facilities women have and the easier it is for them to manage. But actually, economic factors are not the only ones that determine a woman's ability to combine her two roles. Cultural and ideological assumptions also appear to play an important part. Negative attitudes towards women's work are decisive in inhibiting some women from seeking waged employment and in constraining their ability to deal with conflict regarding domestic expectations.

The vast majority of women (76 out of 50) believe that their husbands' support, and their legitimation of their wives' work, was the most important factor which facilitated their work. Because

Saudi society is a male-dominated society, a man's consent to and understanding of his wife's work is decisive. Men play an important role in a woman's life in Saudi society; they can be a source of power and encouragement for a woman by pushing her to achieve certain goals. They can also be a source of frustration and tension for a woman by discouraging her from achieving her aims. Most women I interviewed who felt they managed successfully, confessed that their husbands were the main factor behind their success. At the same time, most women who found their roles to be in conflict, attribute their difficulties to the fact that their husbands wanted them to resign and kept on nagging them to leave their jobs. A businesswoman said:

It is not an easy task for women to combine their two roles. It needs a lot of a woman's patience and effort. I think there are different factors which can help women to succeed in her tasks. Most important of all is the husband; he should consider the situation of his wife in her employment. He should give up some of his self-indulgent habits and accept the fact that his wife will not be there to wait for him every time he comes home. He should not expect his wife to be a hundred per cent well dressed and always waiting for him with a smile on her face, and he should not invite guests suddenly and put her in an embarrassing situation. Also, the availability of domestic help or nurseries or a baby sitting system are important for working women.

A social worker said:

I think if a woman has a strong will, she could manage her two roles, but her husband should help her to do so. By helping, I don't mean helping in housework but helping her by not creating problems for her and always nagging her to leave the job. I think a woman can never succeed to combine her double roles if her husband does not support her in her work.

My data emphasize that women's ability to combine her two responsibilities does not only depend on the material aspects of domestic labour or child care, but also on Saudi ideology towards women's work. Child care services are important but not a sufficient guarantee that women can easily combine their "double roles". Although some of my respondents have the full range of facilities including domestic help, and their children are old enough to go to school, they are nevertheless struggling to manage and feel their work is a form of conflict because their husbands always complain about their work. On the other hand, some of my respondents who have four or five children and do not have a domestic servant manage to combine their double roles because their husbands are considerate and sometimes help them in looking after the children while they are at work. Since most working women believe that housework is a woman's work, most women find it perfectly natural to begin their housework as soon as they return home from their salaried job. They do not expect their husbands to help in domestic work. Failing to cope with the housework by themselves would be considered to be threatening to the marriage and would also call into question their self definition as a mother and housewife.

In her study of American working women, Lopata (1980) has indicated that women felt that they gave more help to their husbands than they received. For most working women, their husbands' influence is psychological rather than instrumental;

husband's support and approval are very important for a woman's career. Most women I interviewed believed that a woman's role in relation to her husband is to provide support and enable him to succeed in his work, but she does not often expect the same thing from him. A husband who is supportive of his wife's career is considered an exception in Saudi society.

Many respondents emphasized the importance of their husbands' consideration. The word "consideration" in itself, of course, is a very relative concept; it varies from one person to another. Most of my respondents define "the considerate husband" as the husband who drives his wife to and from her work and who does not nag her to leave the job. Some respondents define a considerate husband as the husband who helps his wife to succeed in her job by respecting her job demands such as to be late at work if necessary or to travel or to continue her studies. He helps himself at home and if she asks his help or advice he will be pleased to give it. He also does not invite guests if he knows that she has work to do. Sixteen out of fifty respondents emphasized that their husbands are very considerate and supportive; they admitted that without their husbands' consideration, they would not be able to combine their double roles.

One of my respondents gave an example of how a husband's support can help a woman to combine her double roles. Sultanah is a nurse and her husband is a nursing technician. She is from Riyadh and her husband from Jazira. They have been married for nineteen years and have four children.

I think a husband's consideration for his wife's job is the most important factor that enables a working woman to combine her double roles. If the husband is considerate, everything will be alright. Some men allow their wives to work as long as her work does not lead to any neglect of her domestic responsibilities but, let's face it, we are human beings. There is no one who is perfect and makes no mistakes. My husband, thank God, has always been very considerate. I was sixteen when I got married. I was working for eight months before being married. I accepted my husband's offer of marriage on condition that I could go on working after marriage. I used to work two shifts a day—from 6 a.m. to 12 noon and from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. I had my first baby after two years of marriage. I used to prepare her bottles early in the morning and take her to my mother. At 12 a.m. my husband picked me up and we passed our daughter. He dropped us home and went back to his work, which ended at 2 p.m. I used to cook the food the day before. As soon as I arrived home, I prepared the lunch and cleaned the house until my husband came back from his work. My husband worked in the afternoon as well. I used to do most of the housework, cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing at night. I was feeling extremely tired but I was still young, and I was very happy and satisfied. If you are happy you will bear anything. Now my work schedule is changed; I have to work from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. My children have grown up. It has become easier for me to combine my two roles. I cannot deny my husband's role in my success. It is true that he has never helped me in housework, but he has been very supportive and he used to look after our children while I was at work.

One of the remarkable changes I have noticed during my fieldwork is the increasing number of women who make it a condition to keep on working after marriage. As I have mentioned in Chapter Six, sixteen out of fifty respondents made it a condition in the marriage contract that they would work after marriage. Most of these women are working in jobs which are less esteemed (for women) in Saudi society such as doctors, nurses, and social workers and therefore feel the opposition of their husbands is more likely. This phenomenon indicates that educated women have become more

aware of their rights and more conscious of the importance of work and financial independence for themselves.

Also, I would like to state that most working women who described their husbands as very considerate, emphasized that their husbands' support was psychological rather than physical. Their husbands usually do not participate in any housework tasks, but they encourage them to achieve their goals and ambitions.

Twenty-one out of fifty women interviewed described their husbands as considerate because they allowed them to work as long as their work did not interfere with their familial responsibilities. A teacher said:

My husband is understanding about my work. He takes me to and from work, and he has never asked me to resign and stay at home. He gets angry only during the examination period because we have to work from 4-7 p.m. to correct the exam papers.

A secretary at university said:

I think my husband is an understanding person. He is the one who encouraged me to work but on condition that my work does not affect my domestic responsibilities. He takes me to work and back and he has never complained, but he does not like me to take on a afternoon shift or overtime.

Because Saudi society assumes that housework is a woman's natural role, many Saudi men feel that they have the right to prevent their wives from working if they fail to fulfill their domestic responsibilities. Thus, many Saudi men do not feel the contradictory situation when they allow their wives to work on

condition that their work does not interfere or conflict with their domestic duties. My data show that most working women's demands from their husbands are very modest. Most of them said that all they wanted was their husbands to permit them to go to work and to not push them to resign.

Eight out of fifty respondents described their husbands as inconsiderate. They make problems about any small thing. They expect everything to be perfect. They always complain about their wives' work and try to persuade them to resign. Samiah is a social worker; she has been married for three years and has a twelve month old daughter. She finds her waged work difficult and at the time of my fieldwork, she submitted her resignation.

After my maternity leave I applied for three months off unpaid because I was breastfeeding. After this period, problems started because my husband was against the idea of having a domestic servant to look after our daughter, and there was no good nursery where you could safely leave your child. My mother-in-law was very helpful and offered to look after my daughter while I was at work, but we had another problem. Our work was very near our home, but it was very far to my in-law's house. We tried to drop off our daughter every day in the morning with my mother-in-law. But it was extremely difficult, particularly in the rush hour. So we decided to spend the day with my family-in-law until my daughter went to bed there and then we returned to our home. Later on, we decided to move to my in-law's house but still our clothes are in our home, so we go every day to fetch clothes and so on. But we are not happy in this way of life; we don't feel settled. Finally I've decided to resign, although my family and my family-in-law feel sorry for me.

Norah is a bank teller. She has two children from her first marriage, and she married again two years ago. She explained the importance of a husband's consideration for his working wife as

follows:

I think the main problem for working woman is not her children but her husband. When I left my ex-husband, I moved back to live with my family. My mother used to take care of my children while I finished university and began to work at the bank. I used to work two shifts a day from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. I was working very hard and I succeeded in my work. When I got married again the first thing my husband asked me to do was to stop working in the afternoon. Although he was working two shifts a day, he liked to feel that his wife was a housewife. I asked the manager if I could stop work in the afternoon, but he refused. He allowed me to work in the afternoon only for three days of the week. But still I have difficulty in integrating my job with my duties as a wife. Sometimes I sit in my office thinking, "What am I going to cook for lunch?" This question annoys me and if I ask my husband he says, "Cook anything. But actually he wants different kinds of food every day and if I cook just anything he says, "Of course you are a working woman; you don't have time to do your domestic work." I'll tell the truth, Saudi men want their wives to be very good housewives, very well educated, and to behave like a lady in front of other people. They are looking for a superwoman. I have noticed that non-Saudi colleagues do not have the same problems as we do. Although they are married and have children, their husbands are more understanding about their work. They know that work is work and there are no excuses. When a man accepts that his wife is going to work, he respects all the demands of her work. But our men allow us to work only if our work does not conflict with our duties as housewives. It is not only children who need someone to look after them, it is men as well.

These cases emphasize the importance of husband's support for his wife's work. The first case shows that although Samiah has only one child, and she has the financial ability to hire domestic help, and her mother-in-law was willing to look after her daughter, she was unable to negotiate her double roles because her husband does not want to hire a domestic servant and does not want to put their daughter in a nursery. The second case also shows that although Norah's children are old enough to take care of

themselves, and she has a domestic help, she faces some difficulties in managing her two roles because her husband wants her to stop working in the afternoon. Although, he himself is working in the afternoon, he does not want his wife to work like he does. He likes to come home and find his wife waiting for him. Some Saudi men are in a contradictory situation. They accept that their wives work, but they are not willing to make any sacrifices.

One of the important questions that this issue raises is, whether or not the mothering role conflicts with women's paid work? My data indicate that most of the problems of working mothers emerged from their marital responsibilities, not from the mothering role. When a husband permits his wife to work and at the same time, does not accept that his children should be in a nursery for a few hours and refuses to employ a domestic help to look after them, while also expecting his wife to fulfill all her domestic responsibilities in the same way as a full time housewife, this means that a working mother will always be under threat of being neglectful. We have seen before that some working mothers, despite having four or six children, manage to reconcile their two roles because their husbands are considerate. In contrast, the latter cases show that although these women have only one or two children, they cannot manage their two roles successfully because their husbands want them to be one hundred per cent housewives.

Throughout my fieldwork, I found out that many Saudi people feel that it is acceptable for a divorced women or a widow to work even if they have children, because they do not have marital

responsibilities. Saudi society assumes that when a woman gets married, and has somebody to support her, she should stay at home to serve her husband and look after her children. This means that it is not the motherhood role per se that conflicts with women's paid work, but her marital obligations.

Interestingly enough, there seems to be little relationship between the degree of a husband's education or his income level or his occupation and his degree of support for his working wife. The sixteen men who were described as considerate husbands by their wives differ substantially in their levels of incomes, education and occupations.

When I first started my fieldwork, I assumed that the higher the level of education men have, the more supportive they would be of their working wives, and Al-Ammar (1982) in her statistical study supported this view. In her study of education and its impact on people's attitudes towards women's work in Riyadh, she argues that the higher the level of education men have, the more supportive they are of women's work (result significant at the .05 level). However, I was struck in my present study to find that education alone is not enough to make men supportive of their wives' work. Some husbands of working women I interviewed, although they were doctors or university teachers, were against their wives' seeking paid jobs because they liked their wives to be at home waiting for them. They do not like their wives to be busy with things other than familial affairs.

Although the husband's consideration is by far the major

factor that enables some working women to combine their salaried jobs with their domestic responsibilities, there are other factors which affect men's supportiveness such as the social context, for example, some of my respondents indicated that their husbands used to help them when they were abroad, and stopped when they back to Riyadh. Four of the women interviewed claimed that social attitudes towards the sexual division of labour were an important factor that makes waged work problematic for women.

Four of my respondents emphasized that a working woman's awareness of her duties as a housewife, on the one hand, and her paid work on the other, would make her do her best to maintain the balance between her two roles. They believe that if a woman understands her duties, she will succeed in her task, but if she gives one side more than the other, she will not succeed. Generally speaking, one can see that there are a variety of cultural factors that hinder Saudi working women to combine their double roles such as women's attitudes towards their role in the family, and people's attitudes towards women. However, the most significant of these is the attitudes of the husband towards his wife's work.

Male Supremacy

An important question that emerges from this debate is: what makes women accept their subordination or in other words, what are

the sources of male supremacy in Saudi society? Male supremacy is a common phenomenon in most societies. It exists under different economic, politic, and religious systems. However, one should not assume that it is a universal phenomenon. In some societies men and women are more equal in the labour market than in terms of family legislation (Mohsen 1974; Mernissi 1975). In other societies women have more equal rights in the family than in the labour market. It is very difficult to identify the main factors that determine men's superiority on one side or the other.

Nonetheless, one says that women accept their subordination because they are brought up to believe that the present sexual division of labour is natural. As we have seen in Chapter Five, boys and girls are treated differently. Socialization in Saudi Arabia gives boys various educational and social facilities which encourage them to develop their capacities more than girls. Girls are brought up seeing their mothers serving their fathers. They realize that this is their expected role in the future: to serve their husbands and look after their children. Boys also are brought up to believe that masculinity is more highly valued higher position than femininity. Being a man means you are destined to be the head of the family. In Saudi Arabia, men derive their power from three moral principles.

1-Al-Nafaqa According to Islamic legislation, it is a man's responsibility to his wife to provide for her maintenance. Although Islam guarantees women the right to hold their own property and to be financially independent, the responsibility of

providing family maintenance *nafaqa* is only a man's duty. *Nafaqa* is the basic economic relationship between a husband and wife. The superiority of men over women is justified in the Koran (in verse 4: 33) by the fact that man only is expected to provide his family's *nafaqa*. This sexual division of labour places men in a superior position in the family. According to Saudi norms, a woman is responsible for domestic affairs and a man is responsible for the public affairs of the family.

When a man gets married, he expects his wife to keep the house clean, to cook his food, to produce children and to comfort him. A woman is expected to create a home atmosphere for her husband that will encourage him to succeed in his job. Family routine is adjusted according to a man's schedule. If a husband's job is transferred to another country, it is his wife and children who should follow him. If the children are sick, it is a woman, not a man, who should nurse them. All these factors encourage the man to devote most of his time to his work and to succeed in it. A man's success in his work increases his earnings, and this strengthens his power in the family.

2- Men's power to initiate divorce and to marry co-wives: As I have mentioned in Chapter Five, although Islam gives men the right to initiate divorce and to marry up to four wives under certain circumstances, some Saudi men resent these rights. They use these rights to threaten women and keep them submissive to their own authority.

3- Men's access to public places: The restrictions on women's

movements, on the one hand, and men's great freedom on the other, give men more access to public places than women. As I have mentioned before, women do not have the same access to government offices as men do. The restriction on women's driving their own cars makes them always in need of men for transport. As I have also mentioned, some men refuse to drive their wives to their work and this affects women's performance of their paid work. All these factors strengthen male supremacy in Saudi society and make women accept their subordination as something natural.

Saudi Gender Identity

Islam constitutes the fundamental influence in Saudi cultural beliefs in general and gender identity in particular. As I have mentioned before, Islam predominates in Saudi society. Islam as a religion is very flexible. It is considered to be one of the miracles of the Koran that it can suit people in different historical and geographical eras. There are many verses in the Koran (such as 53:44; 40:39 ;70:71) which are directed to men and women as equal citizens. These verses emphasize that men and women have the same duties and should receive the same rewards and punishments. At the same time, there are a few verses (such as 4:37) which indicates that men have had more advantages bestowed *qiwama* on them than women because they are the breadwinners of the family. The word *qiwama* in Arabic literally means guardianship. This word is interpreted in a wide range of

meanings. Some Muslim scholars use it to mean that God chooses man to be in a superior position over women and to be their guardian because women are weak by nature (Abdel Baqi, 1977). Others assume that male supremacy is not absolute. Men and women are superior to each other in some respects (Siddiqi, 1980: 19). Some Muslim scholars argue that *qiwama* is a responsibility and a duty on a man to serve woman and look after her. For them, it is a duty more than an advantage (Sharawi, 1983).

These various verses of the Koran give support to different positions in regard to issues concerning women. Modernists cite certain verses and argue that Islam encourages equality between sexes. Women should participate more in public life and in the labour force (Al-Gadi, 1979; Abdel-Hay, 1993). On the other hand, the conservatives cite other verses and argue that Muslim women should be confined to their homes and men only should be in public (Al Jasser, 1984; Al Barral, 1985). Since the Al-Saud family considers the Wahabi teachings to be the basis of Saudi legislation, conservative attitudes dominate Saudi culture.

As I have mentioned in Chapter Five, Islam in Saudi Arabia represents only a male interpretation of Islam. Women do not have any role in the religious institutions as they used to have in early Islam. The majority accept the prevailing interpretation of Islam. On the other hand, a few educated women are aware of their rights in Islam. These women believe that Islam gives women many rights, but customs and traditions prevent them from enjoying these rights.

The emergence of women's movements in the West has made Saudi men feel threatened and has put more stress on Muslim women and their mode of behaviour. Thus, many Saudi women do not support the women's movements as they exist in the West. For Saudi women, such women's movements not only threaten the sexual division of labour in the family but also could destroy their beliefs and religion.

Also, Saudi traditions play an important role in enforcing the male dominance. Not all Saudi traditions have emerged from Islam. Male supremacy existed in the Arabian Peninsula hundred of years before the emergence of Islam. Women in the pre-Islamic era were under the subjugations of men. Female infanticide was prevalent, women were inherited as part of male property, and polygamy was unlimited (Clement 1982). Some practices in Saudi society although they do not confirm with Islamic teachings, still they have a strong emphasis on people's behaviour. Saudi people do not make any distinction between Islamic teachings narrowly defined and many other traditional behaviour. Many Saudis conceive of Islam and "tradition" as two sides of one coin. In practice, Islam is interpreted according to people's interests and traditions. For example, although the Koran makes it clear (in verses 46: 17,22) that socialization is the responsibility of both parents, in present day Saudi society socialization is assumed to be only a woman's responsibility. Although Islam gives women the right to maintain their own property, traditions hinder them from enjoying this right.

As I have already mentioned, material constraints are not the

only problems for working women. Effective time allocation and organization of domestic work to fit in with paid work will not end the problems of working women. This does not mean that I am ignoring the importance of the material factors such as having domestic replacements, nurseries or day care centres and transportation, etc, but I argue that these things will not solve all the problems of working women's double roles. There is another significant problem most working women face, which is the attitudinal constraint. This problem is rooted in gender identity. Most studies about working women in developed and developing countries focus on the problem of the "double day" of working women, and the different strategies that women use to reconcile their waged work with domestic work. But the important question few studies have discussed is, why do women accept to work so hard in each of these two roles? Why is it a duty for a woman to try to manage these two roles? Women accept the performance of two roles because they are socialized to see their domestic role as their natural role. Women are brought up to believe that housework is a feminine role; it becomes part of their gender identity to be responsible for domestic affairs. Failing to do so affects women's self-image. Most women tend to feel guilty if they fail to perform their mothering or housewifery roles.

Thus, even when women enter the labour force, they still feel it is their responsibility to manage the domestic tasks. Women always locate themselves within the dominant culture. They cannot see themselves as a separate category. Since most cultures are

male-dominated, women tend to see themselves through the male view. Moore (1986), in her study of Kenya, argues that women always conceive of their roles in the society through the dominant culture:

Women cannot construct models of themselves outside that realm of socially constructed meanings and practices which is culture; nor can they articulate or represent their position without using the cultural categories and constructions within which such articulation and representations find meaning and structure (Moore 1986: 169).

Every society has a certain image of how men and women should behave. Deviation from performance of these expected roles exposes an individual to different types of social sanctions. According to the sexual division of labour in Saudi society, women should be confined to their homes to raise children and perform domestic tasks. Women's work is seen as an invasion by women of a man's world. Thus, most Saudi people do not feel comfortable with the idea of women seeking paid jobs, and working women are always vulnerable to people's accusations of being neglectful or selfish. Working women must work very hard to defend themselves and to prove their ability to maintain their two roles successfully.

On the one hand, working women try hard to emphasize that their paid work does not affect their familial responsibilities. Motherhood and paid work are assumed to be in conflict, because they see it is against the "appropriate" sexual division of labour in the family. Thus, working mothers try hard to prove that they are as "good" mothers and housewives as they used to be before

started their paid work. On the other, because women's paid work is a new phenomenon in Saudi society, women need to work very hard to prove their capacities in the labour market. Men do not face these challenges. Men's role in the family entitles them to be served and obeyed in the family. Fatherhood and paid work are not seen to be in conflict. On the contrary, they are mutually supportive. Their abilities in the labour market are unquestioned. All these factors enable men to be more productive in the world of work. It is not only the material work itself that women face when they enter the labour market but the attitudinal constraints as well.

Since the dominant culture in Saudi society is essentially a male representation, women's conceptions of themselves reflect the accepted male view. Working women face three types of attitudinal constraints. First, women's attitudes towards sex roles in the family still assume that it is a "natural" division of labour. The present study has shown that although Saudi women enter the labour force, and some of them are very successful in their careers, they still like to be known as housewives or working housewives. They insist that they do not like their husbands to participate in housework because it might affect their masculinity and their respect.

Second, people's expectations of women's role in the family could be a source of support or hindrance for working women. If people believe that women have the right to a self-paid job, they would not put many pressures on working women to combine their

double roles.

Third, husbands' attitudes and support for their wives' work play an important role in working women's lives. Because men are assumed to be the head of their families, men's approval and consideration of their working wives play a significant role in helping women to achieve their goals. However, from the present study and that of Lopata (1980), it appears that husbands' support remains psychological rather than material.

Summary

This chapter argues that while material constraints are part of the challenge that working women face in Riyadh, they are not as important as cultural and ideological constraints. Working women face three types of ideological constraint: their attitudes towards themselves, husbands' attitudes towards their wives work and social attitudes towards women. Because Saudi Arabia is a male-dominated society, husbands play an especially important role in their wives' lives. Husbands can be a source of power and success for their wives. They can also be a source of frustration and tension for their wives. Husbands derive their authority in Saudi society from three basic sources: the principle of *al-naafaqa*, the right to initiate divorce and marry up to four wives, and their access to public places.

Although, women do enter the labour force, they still look upon themselves and are still regarded by others as housewives. Women's conception of their gender identity is a reflection of the dominant culture, and the prevailing culture is essentially a male view.

In my opinion, when we look at the relationship between production and reproduction, we should consider how this relationship affects both sexes and their positions in the family. The assumption that the man is the breadwinner places him in a superior position over women in the family and encourages him to succeed in his work. A man's success in his career strengthens his position in the family. In contrast to this is the woman's situation, which is dominated by the assumption that a woman's primary responsibility is to produce children and supply happiness to all family members. So even when a woman enters the labour force, her work comes in a secondary position to her familial responsibilities, and this strengthens her subordination in the family.

Chapter IX

Conclusion

This study has focused on the mutual relationship between the productive and reproductive roles of Saudi working mothers in the city of Riyadh, and the different material and ideological factors that help or hinder women to combine their roles as mothers and housewives with their salaried jobs. Since it is difficult to understand the relationship between women's two roles in isolation from the social and economic character of the society as a whole, I have tried to investigate women's lives before and after the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia and to consider how these socio-economic changes have affected women from different family statuses.

There is rigid sexual segregation in Saudi Arabia. Women are not supposed to deal directly with men unveiled. The overriding emphasis on segregation between the sexes, which is heavily affected by legislation and Islamic moral principles, has helped to create separate domains for men and women. Both sexes have their own differing public and private spheres. Thus, I found it difficult to apply the dichotomy of public and private in the same way as it is used by many anthropologists (Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974) to Saudi society. It is difficult to determine what is public

and what is private. For example, should women's salaried jobs which are segregated from men be regarded as public or private? One can argue that the gender dichotomy in Saudi society is of such overriding social significance that the public versus private distinction is only of secondary importance.

The rules of sexual segregation in Saudi Arabia, have their positive and negative impact on women. On the one hand, they enable women to have their own lives and to feel relatively free apart from men. On the other, the exclusive employment of men in government offices, private companies, and shops, combined with the rules of segregation, make women more dependent on men to carry out many activities on their behalf.

Since Islam constitutes a major aspect of Saudi culture, significant attention was directed in my study to the significance of Islam in defining women's work in Saudi Arabia. Despite the importance of Sharia law as the basis of the legal system in Saudi Arabia and of the definition of separate male and female domains, I argue that Islam in itself is not responsible for women's limited participation in almost all aspects of "public" life. Rather, it is the particular interpretation of Islam current in Saudi Arabia today which is the source of restriction on women. Sociological studies of women in various Muslim countries give different examples of the way in which the interpretations of Islam can vary both from one country to another at one period of time, and in the same country from one historical period to another according to the different political and economic forces in these countries (Tabari,

1983;Bo Utas, 1983; Marshall, 1980; Abdel Hay,1982). As I have mentioned, women in pre-oil Saudi society used to participate in herding and agricultural activities and their work was not regarded as against Islamic teachings at the time because of its necessity for family survival. The influx of wealth, the unification of the kingdom, the dissemination of Wahabi teachings, and the growth of urbanization have all combined to put more pressures on women to be veiled and secluded in their homes. Thus, the contemporary interpretation of Islam emphasizes that men only should be the providers of family subsistence.

The veil is a prominent feature of women's lives in Saudi Arabia. However the meaning it has for them is different from that of women in non-Muslim countries such as India (Jeffery, 1979). The significance of the veil for Saudi women also varies from that in other Muslim countries such as Iran, Egypt, Algeria and South Yemen (Tabari, 1982; Ahmed, 1982; Rezig, 1983). Most studies of the veil carried out by Western researchers see it as a sign of degradation for women. Veiled women are regarded as entirely helpless and passive (White, 1978; Youssef, 1974; Smock, 1977). This study argues that there are different social and political factors supporting the existence and spread of the veil in Saudi society. It is very simplistic to assume that the veil is imposed on women by men. Women themselves participate in perpetuating the veil because, according to Saudi culture, the veil is a sign of family status and honour and it has become a sign of femininity for women.

Women in Saudi society are regarded as the reservoir of

family honour. To protect their purity and chastity, Saudi norms put great emphasis on restricting woman's movements. The restriction on women's movements makes women look upon marriage as their only area of freedom. Marriage is regarded by most Saudi women as their golden goal. It determines a woman's status in society, improves her position in the family and gives her more freedom of movement than unmarried women. At the same time, the institution of marriage determines the division of labour between the sexes in the family. A man is expected to provide for family maintenance, and a woman is expected to perform the housework and take care of the children. This sexual division of labour places women in a secondary position to men in the family. Even when women enter the labour force, their work is expected to take a second place to their obligations to their families. Legislation in Saudi society strengthens men's power in the family. The necessity for men to legitimate their wives' movements and the restrictions on women's control over their own property means that women need men in order to fully experience enjoy their lives. These social and cultural forces combine to help men succeed in their jobs. Men's success in their careers increases their incomes, and this strengthens their power in the family.

The influx of wealth in Saudi society has encouraged the government to pursue a series of five year development plans. Saudi society has witnessed significant socio-economic changes in different aspects of life in a short period of time. The function of the family has changed with the economic changes in the society

as a whole. While the family was formerly a production and consumption unit, today it has become only a consumption unit. More emphasis has been placed on women's consumption role in the family. The family house, meals, clothing, jewellery, household furniture, the number and make of cars, the number and the nationality of domestic help, and the choice children's schools have all become indicators of family status. Increased family consumption has become a sign of higher status. The influx of wealth in Saudi society has raised the standard of living in general, and more families could afford to live solely on the husbands' incomes were it not for the growing competition for status associated with wealth. Competition for consumption is one of the main characteristics of Saudi society as we have seen in Chapter V. In this context, women's economic contribution has become more important in permitting an expanded level of consumption in the family and in maintaining the status of the family.

Much recent research (Boserup 1970; Rogers 1980) has argued that development has negative effects on women. The present study argues that development has some positive and some negative effects on women's lives. The economic development of Saudi society has given women the chance to be educated and to seek paid jobs. Nonetheless, not all women have benefited from this expansion in the same way. Women from poor families have limited access to education and to the labour market. The assumption that men and women are different "species" has prevented development planners

in Saudi society from treating women as an important part of the nation's human resources. Thus, even when women enter the labour force, they are restricted to certain jobs that "suit their nature" such as teaching, health services, social work, banking and private business.

Officially, men and women are supposed to have the same salaries for doing the same job, but men predominate in all senior grades. Men have more access to promotions and vocational training, and the restrictions on women's higher education give men the opportunity to have better salaries than women. These changes have created contradictions between modernity and traditionalism in Saudi society. This contradiction is reflected in Saudi development plans wherein, on the one hand, more schools are opened for women while, on the other, more restrictions are placed on women's higher education and on female employment. This has led to many female university graduates being unemployed in the last few years.

Although women's economic contribution to their families livelihood is restricted to certain jobs and to educated women only, women's paid jobs do give them the chance to be financially independent. Chapter VI and VII indicate that working women feel that their work improves their status in the family. However, this study emphasizes that women's paid work does not automatically improve the status of women in the Saudi family. More important than their work in itself is their control over their cash resources. Half of the women who have higher salaries than their husbands control the family budget and have more power in family

decisions.

Many economists argue that women, in general, are not given equal rights in the labour market because they are less committed and attached to their work (Barron & Norris 1976; Larwood 1985). The present study emphasizes that because of the great stress on Saudi women's domestic roles, most women feel obliged to give their families more priority. However, in their actual behaviour women are also very attached to their work. Few of the women in my study took extra maternity leave to bring up their children. Women's absenteeism is infrequent, and only a small number of women reported that they exceeded their authorized annual period of leave. Despite the cultural challenges that working women face in Saudi Arabia, they are nonetheless satisfied with their jobs and they do their best not to sacrifice one role for the sake of the other. It is interesting to mention that although socialization and the educational system put a great emphasis on women's domestic role, working women have considerable self confidence in their abilities at work. Most women interviewed emphasized that women can work as well as men, if not better.

With the increasing number of women entering the labour market, more emphasis has been given by sociologists to the phenomenon of "double role". Boulding (1976), Buvinic (1987), Fapanel (1975), Hartmann (1981), Westwood (1984) and Pollert (1981) argue that when women enter the labour market, they are confronted with the problem of reconciling the conflicting demands of two distinct kinds of work. Working women are expected to

organize their time efficiently to perform a heavy schedule of domestic and paid tasks. Some of these studies indicate that the shortage of nurseries or daycare centers constitutes the major problem of working women, and they assume that providing these services would solve this problem.

Most of these studies make no distinction between women's double's roles and women's "double day". Although these two concepts are related, I have argued that they need to be carefully distinguished.

The literature about women in developing countries suggests that the availability of domestic help for the middle classes in such countries may make it easier for working women there to combine their double roles than it is for women in advanced industrial societies. The poorer the country the greater the burden that women experience. This statement implies that the richer the country, the lighter the burden women should have. Since Saudi Arabia is one of the richest countries in the world, one might be inclined to think that working women there should face few difficulties in combining their double roles, since they have widespread access to domestic help.

I therefore, began by investigating the relationship between family income and women's double roles. During my fieldwork, I interviewed women from different income levels, educational and occupational categories, and from different ethnic groups to find out why some working women find it easier to combine their double roles than others.

It became clear that although Saudi Arabia is a rich country, not all working women have the same facilities. Women from rich families have more material facilities than women from poor families. Thus, it is true that family income is very important in determining the amount of housework women should perform. The richer the family, the more domestic help women have and the less housework they are expected to perform. However, my interviews suggest that even for working women who are not well-to-do, housework is not seen to be their major problem. Women in Saudi Arabia are brought up to believe that housework is woman's work, and it is out of the question for a woman to ask her husband to help her in the housework. Most Saudi women conceive of their housework as their natural role and thus, even when working in a salaried job, they are quite prepared to continue to perform these tasks. Moreover, when a woman makes the decision to go to work, she is usually able to make the arrangements required to care for her children, either leaving them with domestic help or with her mother or mother-in-law. Saudi working women use different strategies to manage their double day: hiring domestic help, reducing visits and leisure activities, cutting down overtime and night shifts, and seeking support from their female relatives. In other words, the problem of the 'double day' as conceived in the literature is not the major problem faced by Saudi working women.

There are other significant constraints which hinder Saudi working women in their attempt to combine their double roles - constraints which emerge primarily from the gender ideologies

current in Saudi society today. Because the man is considered the head of the family, a woman's decision to go to work should be approved by her husband first. The assumption that the man is the only breadwinner of the family makes woman's work always stand in a secondary position to her husband's work. A woman is expected to adjust her work according to her familial demands. Since men have the right to initiate divorce, some men use this right to hinder or prevent their wives going to work. And finally, the restrictions on women's movements make it impossible for a woman to go to her work without her father, brother, husband or a driver to take her. All these factors show that income is not the decisive factor that enables women to combine their double roles; ideological factors are equally important.

Many women can cope with the problems of scheduling and the work load inherent in the "double day" if they are motivated to do so and can make a full use of available domestic help and their mothers support. On the other hand, even a woman who is fortunate enough to have domestic servants or access to a nursery, may not be able to cope with the pressures that arise from the conflict between her job and her domestic responsibilities if her husband, relatives, and friends still expect her to be only a housewife.

This study contrasts with recent studies of women's double roles in three main ways. First, many studies of working women (Buvinic 1987; Bunster 1987; Per Lee 1981) assume that the "double day" is a general problem affecting all working women. Most of them ignore class structure and its differential effects on women.

Although I have avoided using the concept of class in my study for the reasons I mentioned in Chapter III, I have emphasized the importance of family economic status in giving women differential access to power and to educational and occupational opportunities. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that although women from different family statuses have different rights and duties in Saudi society, all women are regarded in Saudi culture as weak, vulnerable, and in need of protection.

Secondly, some recent studies have been greatly affected by a rather narrowly materialistic approach (Pollert 1981; Westwood 1984). These studies focus on the exploitation of women in class societies and argue that material factors are the determinant factors that hinder women in their attempt to combine their double roles. They completely ignore cultural factors and their affect on the sexual division of labour in the family and women's conceptions of themselves.

Thirdly, are studies of (Birdsall 1983; DaVanzo 1983; Foh Lee 1983; King and Evenson, 1983) which focus their attention on women's ability to successfully accomplish their double day. This study gives equal, if not greater, emphasis to the relationship between ideal and actual behaviour of working women: that is, how women conceive of their roles as mothers and housewives and their actual performance of these roles. Chapter VII has shown that the discrepancy between what women should do and what they are really doing creates conflicting attitudes towards the role of a "housewife" in Saudi society. The influx of wealth in Saudi

society has eased women's performance of their domestic tasks but has not changed attitudes towards a woman's role in the family. Even if a woman does not have housework to perform, she is expected to be confined to her home to play the role of housewife.

Working women in Riyadh face various kinds of cultural and attitudinal constraint. First, there is women's conception of themselves. Although Saudi women do enter the labour force, their perception of themselves is strongly affected by Saudi norms relating to gender roles. Women still locate themselves within the dominant culture which is greatly affected by male representations. Most working women still see themselves as housewives in the first place and see their husbands as the main providers of family maintenance. Professional women, although they perceive that equality is important at the work place, believe that it is difficult to apply this concept in the family setting.

Many educated Saudi women feel uncomfortable about the concept of "equality" applied within the family. For them, equality is related to feminism and sexual "liberation". They feel that equality threatens their beliefs, and gender identity. Most Saudi women treat the sexual division of labour as a natural phenomenon. They endorse the fundamental differences between men and women who are assumed to have different roles in life and thus different duties. This dominant perception of women's nature has made many women feel that they have no right to seek paid jobs as men do. This emphasis on the sexual division of labour in the family has meant that many working women experience profound contradictions

between what they are expected to do and what they are actually doing. This study emphasizes that motherhood as such does not conflict with women's paid work. The constraints that working mothers face derive from ideologies of male supremacy rather than from their mothering role. Per se widows and divorced mothers find it easier to perform their double roles than working mothers.

Secondly, social attitudes towards women's work. Women's salaried work is not welcomed by many Saudi people, despite the fact that most female jobs are segregated from male jobs and many working women have domestic help. We have seen how Islamic commentators in the Saudi press argue that women should be veiled and secluded. Many of them assume that women's paid work causes chaos and disorder in the society on the one hand, and is harmful to women's family members on the other. Many Saudi people are not familiar with the concept of a woman's career. For them, a woman's career is her home and children.

Thirdly, because Saudi society is a male dominated society, the degree of men's support of their working wives is an especially an important variable in women's lives. Although the decision to go to work is usually taken by women, a woman's ability to stay in work and to combine her double roles depends on her husband's support. Married women are not encouraged to enter the labour force because women's financial independence is thought to cause disruption to the sexual division of labour in the family and conflict with accepted male and female behaviour. A man can be a source of support or a source of frustration to his working wife.

Although most women from rich and average family income levels have domestic help, not all these women manage to combine their double roles because their husbands are against the idea of women's salaried employment. On the other hand, some women from poor families, although they do not have the same material facilities as women from rich families, manage nonetheless to combine their double roles because their husbands are supportive and considerate. My data indicate that most Saudi men allow their wives to work as long as their paid work does not affect their domestic responsibilities. Such a statement from men about women puts great pressure on working women. Only a few men were described as "very considerate" husbands by their wives, and at best the women I interviewed emphasized that their husbands support is only moral rather than physical.

I hope in undertaking this work about women's double roles in one of the richest and most conservative of Muslim countries that this study will make a contribution to our understanding of international development processes and, in particular, of women's role in this process. It shows that an increase of wealth in a society does not necessarily lead to more employment for women. Nor does participation in social production lead necessarily to greater autonomy or emancipation for women. Ideological factors are of central importance in encouraging women to enter the labour force and in enabling them to combine their dual roles.

Appendix 1

On the basis of the findings of this study, I would make the following policy recommendations relating to women's role in Saudi Arabian development.

1) If development planners really intend to use all the human resources available in Saudi society, a comprehensive plan should be formulated to encourage all members of the society to work regardless of their sex or class. Development policy should be modified to create new public attitudes which do not undermine the socio-economic value of women in society at large or restrict their role to domestic activities only. The mass media and the educational system should be utilised to encourage women to be more integrated in the national labour force.

2) With the ever-increasing number of educated Saudi women, and the growing problem of female unemployment, the government should use every opportunity to expand the level of female participation in all areas of employment, thus offering the potential to reduce the nation's reliance on foreign workers.

3) It is not enough to provide women with jobs to ensure that women become fully integrated in the labour force. More attention should be given to the problem of the 'double day': to reduce the burden of housework in families of average or low incomes by setting up nurseries, childcare centres, cheap takeaway food shops,

cheap laundries, and facilities for women's transportation.

4) Real Estate Development Fund grants should be given to any member of a family, either male or female, providing they own land in his or her own name.

5) Men and women should have equal access to all facilities of higher education, including overseas grants.

Further studies

I hope that this study will serve as a preliminary study of working women in Saudi society and will lead to more focused studies of patterns of social relationship in specific female institutions. More studies are needed about women in the Ministry of Health and about businesswomen. There is also an urgent need for research about Saudi men, which investigates the male point of view of women's work and how men conceive of gender roles in Saudi society. I hope that this work will be of relevance to the field of international development and, in particular to the sub-field of women studies in the context of Third World development.

Appendix 2

Socail background

-Family name- Age- Place of Birth- Social Condition- Education

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-How many families in the household?

-Is there any family members living away from the family?

-How many pregnancies did you have?

-How many unborn babies have you lost? And when?

-Tell me about your family and your family-in-law?

-Where do your father and mother come from?

-How many brothers and sisters have you got?

-What are their ages, education, and/or occupation?

-How many wives has your father married?

-Where do your parents-in-law come from?

-How many brothers and sisters-in-law have you got?

-What are their ages, education, and/or occupation?

-How many marriages /and or/wives has your father-in-law got?

Residency

-Why did you choose this area to live?

-How long have you been living in your home?

-Is it a house or a flat?

-How many bedrooms have you got?

-Where have you been before moving to this house?

- Do you feel comfortable at home?
- Are you planning to move to another house? When and why?
- Do you live far away from work? or your husband's work? or your children's school?
- How do you manage to get there?
- Do you have a driver?
- If so, how much is his salary? and who pays it?

Education

- Where have you done your schooling (elementary, intermediate secondary..?)
- When and why did you discontinue your education?
- In your opinion, do you think education is of more importance to boys than girls?
- To what level are you going to encourage your children (son or daughters) to attend?
- Do you have children who do not go to school? why?
- Do you think education should be different in its quality and quantity between boys and girls?

Occupation

- Tell me about your career?
- How long have you been employed?
- What is your motive to work?
- Have you faced any resentment or objection when you started working?
- Why do you choose your job?
- How many jobs have you had?

- How many hours do you spend at work?
- Do you think you'll move to another job? why? and when?
- How do you feel about your present job?
- Does it satisfy your creative possibilities, and salary?
- If you have a chance to change it, what would you change it to and why?
- What does work mean to you?
- Do you consider that you have a group (work mates) or friends?
- Do you exchange visits or services with your colleagues? give examples?
- Do you think that women succeed in their work as much as men?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working apart from men?
- Which comes first your career or your family?
- If your husband asked you to resign, would you do it?
- What do you think are the most suitable jobs for women? why?
- How do you feel your family (husband, children, brothers, sisters, parents and parents-in-law) look upon your job?
- How do you think people regard the working women?
- How do you feel about equality between sexes in general?
- How do you feel about equality between sexes in the work place in salary, promotions ..etc?
- Do you think the institution you are working with has a fair policies towards women. explain?
- Does your work entitle you to mix with men? Does your husband know about it? What is his opinion?

Marriage

- Tell me about your marriage?
- How old were you and your husband when you got married?
- When did you get married?
- Did they ask your consent in marriage?
- Is there any kinship between you and your husband?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of marriage for women?
- What was the primary consideration in choosing your husband?
- How much was your *mahr*? who took it?and how it was spent?
- What are the reason for marital problems?
- Do you think your relationship with your husband is any difference from your mother relationship with your father?
- What were the main problems that you had faced in your marriage,and how do you solved it?
- Where did you live in the first years of your marriage?
- Did you have a domestic servant at that time?
- Do you use any contraception?
- Who took the decision of having children?
- Do you usually work in the first years of having a baby?
if so, how looked after the children while you were at work?
- Do you think a woman has the right to use any contraceptive method without her husband's approval?
- How many children are you planning to have?

Sexual Division of Labour

-Do you have a domestic help? if not who takes care of the children when you are at work?

-If you have a domestic servant, how much is her salary and who pays it?

-What are her duties?

-Who does the housework (cleaning, cooking, washing, washing up, ironing and tidying)?

-How many hours do you spend in housework every day?

-What do you prefer most cooking, or washing, or ironing..?

-Do you prefer people addressing you as housewife or working woman? Why?

-Whom do you think is more satisfied a housewife or a working woman?

-Do you think that a woman's work affects her role in the family? how?

-Do you have any hobbies? If so when do you usually practice?

-Do you have any social activities and when do you practice them?

-Do you think you have enough time to rest?

-If you have any problem who is the first one you turn to?

-Does your husband interfere in your salary, visits, and friends?

-Does your husband help in housework?

-In your opinion, what are the housework chores that husbands can perform?

-To what extent does your husband help in achieving your work?

- How many hours a day do you spend with your children?
- Do you think that you spend enough time with your children?
- If you were a housewife, do you think you would give your children more time and concentration?
- Give examples of your working day and your week-end?
- Where do you spend your summer vacation? and how?
- Do you participate in your family decision making? Give examples please?
- Who makes the final decisions about the following:
 - Buying household equipments
 - Choosing furniture
 - Moving house
 - Change husband's job
 - Women's going to work
 - Family holiday
 - Determining daily meals
 - Buying family shopping
 - Controlling finance
 - Buying a new car
 - Determining daily needs

Socialization

- Who takes the decisions concerning the following
 - Children's name
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Education
 - Toys
 - Friends

-Activities and hobbies

- Do you permit your daughter or son to visit their friends, and at what age?
- Do you believe in children's punishment? If so, what kind of punishment do you use? And is there any differences between girls' or boys' punishment?
- If one of your children has a problem, to whom do they go first to you or their father?
- What differences do you think there are between bringing up girls and boys?
- How do you think a girl should be? and a boy should be?
- Do your children (boys or girls) participate in any housework activities?
- Do you prefer your son to marry a housewife or a working woman?
- Do you prefer your daughter to be a housewife or a working woman?
- How do you compare the way you were brought up with the way you are bringing up your children?

kinship

- Where do your parents and parents-in-law live?
- How often do you see them?
- How often does your husband visit them?
- Have you received any services what-so-ever from your parents or parents-in-law?
- Do you or your husband offer any help to your natal family or family-in-law?

Family budgeting

- If you were working before marriage, how did you spend your salary?
- How much is your salary and how much is your husband's?
- Do you have any extra income besides your salary?
- Does your husband have any extra income besides his salary?
- How do you spend your salary?
- Do you save any money from your salary?
- If you were not working, do you think you would have spend the same expenses?

Appendix 3

ie No.	Wife's Education	Wife's Occupation	Wife's Salary	Husband's Education	Husband's Occupation	Husband's Salary
1	Intermediate	Secretary	2,410	Intermediate	Secretary	3,000
2	Teaching Diploma	Teacher	7,061	Intermediate	Typist	5,000
3	B.A.	Business-Woman	11,000	Ph.D.	Professor	12,000
4	M.A.	Doctor	10,000	B.A.	Soldier	13,000
5	B.A.	Headmistress' Assistant	9,000	Intermediate	Businessman	7,000
6	M.A.	Lecturer	8,300	B.A.	Government Official	15,000
7	B.A.	Headmistress	9,000	B.A.	Engineer	6,000
8	M.A.	Lecturer	8,300	Ph.D.	Doctor	20,000
9	Intermediate	Secretary	3,600	Interdediate	Policeman	3,000
10	B.A.	Headmistress	15,000	Intermediate	Businessman	10,000
11	Intermediate	Secretary	3,500	Secondarys	Official	7,000
12	B.A.	Teacher	7,000	Secondary	Businessman	Unknown
13	Teaching Diploma	Teacher	5,200	B.A.	Engineer	17,000
14	B.A.	Teacher	7,000	B.A.	Engineer	12,000
15	Teaching Diploma	Teacher	5,000	Teaching Diploma	Teacher	5,000
16	Secondarys	Teacher	8,000	Intermediate	unemployed	-
17	B.A.	Teacher	5,000	B.A.	Soldier	14,000
18	B.A.	Bank Manager	11,000	M.A.	Doctor	18,000
19	B.A.	Doctor	9,000	Ph.D.	Businessman	35,000
20	Nursing Diploma	Nurse	4,000	Nursing Diploma	Unemployed	-
21	Nursing Diploma	Nurse	5,573	Nursing Diploma	Nurse	6,000
22	Nursing Diploma	Nurse	7,000	Nursing Technical	Technician	5,500
23	Nursing Diploma	Nurse	5,327	Can read and write	Official	8,600

Case No.	Wife's Education	Wife's Occupation	Wife's Salary	Husband's Education	Husband's Occupation	Husband's Salary
24	B.A.	Doctor	8,000	B.A.	Engineer	13,000
25	Nursing Diploma	Nurse	5,000	Can read and write	Postman	4,500
26	B.A.	Doctor	10,500	B.A.	Doctor	5,200
27	Intermediate	Secretary	2,600	Elementary	Policeman	5,625
28	Intermediate	Tailor	3,000	Secondary	Official	5,000
29	Intermediate	Typist	4,000	Intermediate	Policeman	5,000
30	M.A.	Social Worker	9,500	B.A.	Engineer	9,800
31	Intermediate	Typist	3,800	Intermediate	Builder	5,000
32	B.A.	Social Worker	9,000	B.A.	Businessman	Unknown
33	B.A.	Teacher	6,151	B.A.	Engineer	5,800
34	B.A.	Teacher	6,487	B.A.	Official	12,000
35	B.A.	Teacher	8,226	M.A.	Soldier	18,000
36	B.A.	Social Worker	11,500	B.A.	Official	12,500
37	Secondary	Secretary	4,000	B.A.	Manager	9,000
38	Secondary	Bank-teller	10,000	B.A.	Official	7,000
39	B.A.	Social Worker	8,041	B.A.	Businessman	Unknown
40	B.A.	Teacher	6,451	B.A.	Engineer	11,000
41	M.A.	Teacher	5,700	M.A.	Manager	15,000
42	B.A.	Social Worker	5,000	M.A.	Director	9,000
43	Ph.D.	University Teacher	10,000	Ph.D.	University Teacher	10,000
44	M.A.	Headmistress	13,000	M.A.	Businessman	15,000
45	Teaching Diploma	Teacher	5,850	Secondary	Technician	7,500
46	B.A.	Teacher	6,500	Secondary	Student	3,000
47	B.A.	Teacher	6,150	M.A.	Official	15,000
48	B.A.	Businesswoman	7,000	M.A.	Businessman	30,000
49	Ph.D.	University Teacher	10,000	B.A.	Businessman	Unknown
50	B.A.	Businesswoman	10,000	Ph.D.	Official	16,000

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